

Care with activities

When you lift heavy items, keep the load as small as possible and close to your body. Keep your feet apart and **use your strong leg muscles** whilst keeping your back straight. **Always move your feet, do not twist your back.**

Avoid prolonged bending forward. Before, during and after jobs, e.g. gardening and vacuuming, do the following exercise:

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, place your hands in the small of your back and lean backwards. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Back pain usually improves in the short term but it does tend to recur. Keeping fit and continually monitoring your posture – especially when sitting and lifting – will reduce the chances of you having further low back pain in the future.

- If you have an old injury you may find that holding a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel or a using a heat-pack (following the instructions) on the affected area for 10 minutes reduces pain, while for a new injury, which may be hot and swollen, you can use a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel for 10 minutes.

N.B. Be aware that hot and cold can burn and that you need to check (every 5 minutes) that your skin does not become red or blotchy. If this happens, stop.

If you need this information in another language or alternative formats contact the Communications Team on 01905 760020 or email communications@worcestershire.nhs.uk



Back pain – what you can do to help your back

How to manage your back pain and reduce the chances of it recurring

Exercise

General exercise helps you feel good about yourself and helps to release natural painkillers (endorphins). Walking and swimming are two of the best forms of exercise to help ease and prevent back pain.

Movement is beneficial for your back!

- Research suggests that walking will improve your pain and therefore will help with your daily activities and even lift your spirits!
- Staying at work / continuing with your usual activities is normally helpful.
- Pace yourself with activities - avoid 'all or nothing' so that you combine exercise with some rest.
- Getting stiff joints and muscles working can be painful, remember, this is a normal response and not a sign of damage. Feeling a bit sore initially is also normal and often is a good sign that you are making progress.
- Over the counter painkillers can be helpful. A pharmacist will be able to advise you about appropriate tablets to help you manage your pain and continue with your day-to-day activities.



Whilst you may have back pain, your back and spine is strong and there is unlikely to be any serious damage to your back.

Research has shown that resting for more than a day or so does not help and may actually prolong pain and disability. You may need to modify your activities initially but, the sooner you get back to normal activity and work, the sooner you will feel better.

Specific exercises keep your back supple and strong.

Your physiotherapist will give you advice and / or a home exercise programme.

Please let your physiotherapist know if there are any sports or activities which you particularly enjoy and they will take this into account when providing you with advice and your exercise programme.

Please discuss your expectations of physiotherapy with your physiotherapist.

Posture

- Do not slouch. Sit close to the back of the chair, supported with a rolled up towel placed in the hollow of your lower back and with your feet firmly on the floor.
- Remember to get up and move; frequent changes of position will help prevent back pain.
- Changing your position or activity frequently throughout the day will help to prevent and reduce stiffness and pain. Try to build up your general activity gradually.