



Information for patients, relatives and carers

Back Pain

The following guidance is intended to help you in your recuperation after attendance at the Emergency Department with an episode of back pain.

Back pain is very common and usually improves within a few weeks or months. Investigations such as x-rays, scans and blood tests are rarely useful in treating back pain.

Pain relief

If you have been given painkillers to help with the pain it is important to take them regularly, rather than waiting for it to worsen. You may find that tablets such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or co-codamol are sufficient; these can be bought over the counter. If you need stronger painkillers or muscle relaxants you will need to see your GP.

Mobilise

Stay as active as possible, including going to work if you feel able to do so. Avoid activity that aggravates your back pain, but try to gradually increase your activity over the next days and weeks.

Support/posture

Make sure you have a comfortable mattress on your bed which supports your back. When sitting, a cushion behind your lower back may be helpful and try not to slouch. Adjusting your seat position in the car may also help the pain.

Core stability

Your posture and back pain will be helped by toning your core muscles in the lower abdomen, which help support your spine. You can start this lying down, but once you have got the hang of it you can do it walking, sitting or during daily activities.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor with your back neither arched nor flattened.
- Breathe in slowly.
- Breathe out, draw up the muscles of the pelvic floor and draw in the lower stomach muscles below your belly button towards your back.
- Hold this with relaxed breathing for 10 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Gradually increase the hold time up to one minute.

Prevention of further back pain

- Keep active and take regular exercise.
- Pilates classes teach core stability and are available locally.
- Avoid heavy lifting especially when you are twisting at the same time.

Should any of the following symptoms occur it may suggest a more serious problem and you should seek medical attention urgently:

- Difficulty passing or controlling urine or loss of bladder or bowel control.
- Numbness around back passage or genitals.
- Numbness, pins and needles or weakness in both legs.
- Unsteadiness on your feet.
- Swelling or deformity in your back
- Unintentional weight loss
- It does not improve after resting, is worse at night and affecting your sleep
- The pain is coming from the top of your back, between your shoulders, rather than your lower back

① If you have further concerns about your condition, please contact your GP. If you are not sure what to do, call 111 or get help from 111 online: <https://111.nhs.uk/> [When to use NHS 111 - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print, Easy Read or audio, please ask the staff who are looking after you.

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