


**Help! I've
hurt my back**

What do I do?



Ok so you've hurt your back...



- You may have been picking up something and felt a pop...
- You may have been playing sports and hurt your back...
- You may not quite remember how it happened...
- But the fact is that your back now hurts!
- Surprisingly the pain you feel is not a true reflection of the state of the tissues!
- So what can you do?
- How can you help yourself?



Are you wondering what is causing this pain?



- You might be disappointed but no one can certainly tell you which single structure is causing the pain
- We cannot see what hurts on scans
- There are many ligaments, muscles, tendons and structures in the spine which can all become sensitive if you hurt it
- Generally discs don't cause back pain, if they herniate that produces pain going down into the legs (what you know as sciatica)
- In most cases of acute back pain, some ligaments were sprained, muscles pulled or joints stretched
- You do not have to know what exactly hurts to get better

+ The myths about back pain

- Back pain does not mean the structures are damaged, it just tells us that structures are sensitised
- More pain does NOT equal damage
- Scans will not show what is hurting, they show a picture of the spine in a static position
- Majority of people do not need surgery
- You will not do any damage by moving your back if you hurt it
- It is important to stay active otherwise your muscles will become weak and can lead to more pain and inactivity

+ So what can I do?



FOR BACK PAIN

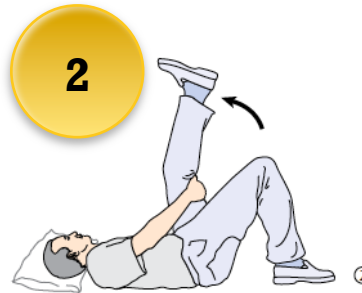
- You may have more pain sitting or standing so try to find a position that is comfortable but do keep regularly moving
- Try doing exercises in the opposite direction of your pain (bending forward vs arching backwards)
- You can ice the area for the first few days, then apply heat

FOR LEG PAIN

- You are experiencing sharp pain shooting down the legs and it is likely to be more painful when you sit or bend over
- People find it comfortable to lie on their backs with legs up
- Good exercises include bending backwards especially when lying on your tummy and pushing up with your arms

+ Specific back exercises

- Many informative leaflets have been produced to show you which exercises and stretches are commonly carried out
- Download these:
 - 1) Arthritis Research. Back pain
 - <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org>
 - 2) Back Care Exercises
 - <http://www.backcare.org.uk>



Simple exercises



NB: Upper knee should be directly above lower knee.



Back stretch

Lie on your back, hands above your head. Bend your knees and roll them slowly to one side, keeping your feet on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3 times on each side.



Deep Lunge

Kneel on one knee, the other foot in front. Facing forwards, lift the back knee up. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times on each side.



One-leg stand (front)

Holding onto something for support if needed, bend one leg up behind you. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times on each side.



Pelvic tilt

Lie down with your knees bent. Tighten your stomach muscles, flattening your back against the floor. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

+ Which exercises are best for back pain

- Lots of research tried to identify which exercises are best
- There is generally no single exercise which is better
- The key is to keep active and do what you can do comfortably
- Common exercises prescribed: yoga, pilates, stretching, cycling, walking, swimming
- Because it is difficult to determine which one structure is hurting, we must focus on function and what limitations one has
- Rehabilitation programmes can be effective in retraining specific muscles



+ What about medication?

- It is advised that you take some medication if you have a lot of pain and are having difficulties doing everyday tasks
- It is recommended to take painkillers and anti-inflammatories which are both available over the counter
- Paracetamol is a basic painkiller which should be used first (before stronger painkillers like Co-codamol or Tramadol)
- Ibuprofen, Nurofen-these are anti-inflammatories and are also worth trying if you have pain and inflammation (after an injury)
- Some people have stomach problems with anti-inflammatories so make sure you take them along with food and read the instructions
- Do consult your GP about new medication and prescriptions for stronger ones



+ Tips & advice

- If you can stay at work then carry on working
- If you can't work than just do your best to stay active
- It is safe to do exercises in water or gentle swimming
- It is also safe to exercise on stationary bikes if comfortable
- Do not try to rush into activities too quickly
- If you drive regularly, download this document for more info:
[here](#)



+ Back pain in general..

- Around 80% of all people will back pain at some point in their lives
- The vast majority of back pain is mechanical in nature
- Often it is about changing movement patterns and re-training certain muscles which a physiotherapist can help you with
- Doctors and therapists cannot often tell what exactly is hurting
- Pain can also be influenced by factors like stress, lifestyle, activities, job satisfaction, negative emotions, family situation, relationships etc.



+ Summary

- Majority of back pain resolves within 6 weeks
- You may need to take some painkillers and anti-inflammatories
- You may need to modify activities and work
- Try to stay at work-it's good for you!
- Remain as active as possible but do what you can do comfortably
- Try out some gentle stretches and exercises
- See a physiotherapist, chiropractor and osteopath
- For more info go to www.spinespace.co.uk

