

Acute Back Pain Advice

Back pain is very common and affects as many as 80% of us at some time in our lives. In the past it was thought that the best treatment for acute back pain was bed rest. We now feel that this should be avoided where possible. The spine relies on strong muscles to support it and prolonged bed rest weakens the muscles. This reduces the support of the back and the pain may last for longer.

What Should I Do If I Develop Back Pain?

Medication

Simple pain-killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen should be taken regularly as this will produce a more beneficial effect than when taken occasionally. If these are not efficient to control your pain, you may need to consult your doctor who may prescribe stronger pain killers or muscle relaxants for a short period of time.

Activity

The important thing is to stay as active as the pain allows. Where possible continue with normal daily activities although you may need to reduce the amount of time spent sitting or standing at one stretch as these often make pain worse. If you are working you should try and stay at work or return as soon as possible. If you have a very physical job, it may be necessary to adapt your working pattern for a short time but this should

Manual therapy

There is evidence that early manipulative therapy can improve symptoms in the short term and, in skilled hands there the risks are low. Massage and acupuncture may also help to reduce spasm in the muscles, which is one of the causes of pain.

Exercises

In the long term, it is important to strengthen the muscles supporting your back if you are prevented further acute episodes, and avoid the pain becoming chronic. Appropriate exercises will vary depending on the underlying cause for your back pain but include exercises to strengthen the back muscles, those to improve posture and those to increase the support of the spine by the deep abdominal muscles. Some of these exercises are difficult to learn and advice should be sought from a sports physician, physiotherapist or Pilates instructor.

When Should I Seek Advice?

1. If your pain is not controlled by simple pain-killers.
2. If you have leg pain, numbness or pins and needles.
3. If you develop any incontinence of urine or faeces or are having difficulty passing urine.

4. If your pain is worse at night.
5. If you have any other symptoms such as weight loss, a breast lump or passing blood in your urine or stool.
6. If your pain is worsening rather than getting better despite painkillers.
7. If you are worried about your symptoms.

If in doubt contact SOS Centres and get it checked out!