

Back Pain

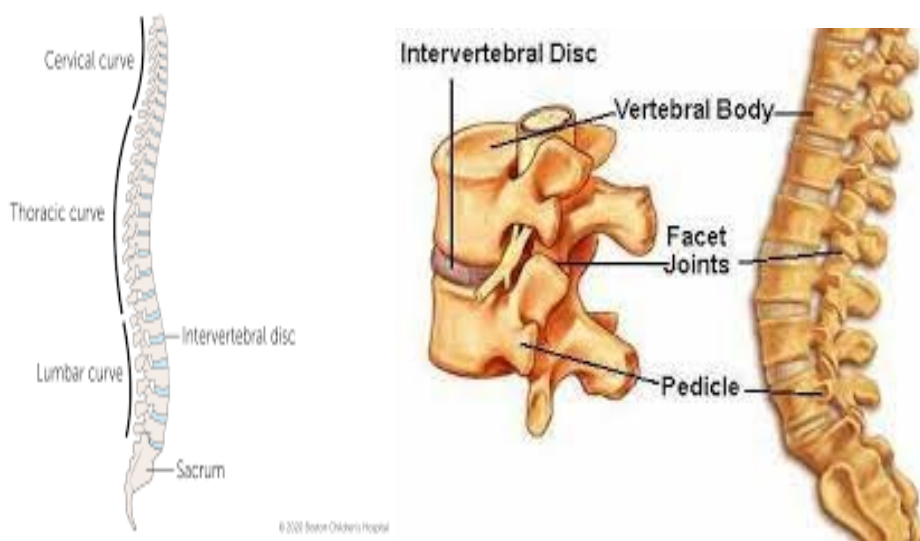
Information for Patients

What is back pain?

Back pain can be caused by many different things, often in children and young people it is caused by growing bones and muscles becoming tight which can cause your back to feel painful and sometimes stiff. Very occasionally it can also be caused by the discs that sit between the bones of your spine but this isn't very common in young people. In almost all cases of back pain it is completely safe and also very important to keep moving as best you can. You may need to take things slowly initially or even take some pain relief but this shouldn't be for a long period of time.

This leaflet contains some basic guidance on how to manage your back pain, the following advice and exercises should help with pain in both your upper and lower back. You may feel some stretching but shouldn't feel any increase in your pain or sharp pain.

Back Anatomy



What is the best treatment?

The best thing you can do for all types of back pain is to keep it gently moving and try your best not to worry about it too much. It is now known that worries can make back pain feel worse so staying positive as well as following the guidance in this leaflet should help reduce your pain. Other things that can help your back feel better include;

- Simple pain relief
- Heat packs
- Gentle exercises
- Trying to avoid staying in one posture for long periods of time whilst playing the computer or studying
- Try and keep going with normal sports and activities if they don't flare up your pain, reduce them a little if they do but try not to stop all sports and activities.

When should I seek further assessment or advice?

There are a few situations in which your child's back pain may require further investigation or assessment;

- If they are under 8 years old.
- If their back pain goes on for more than four weeks after starting the exercises and advice in this leaflet without changing or improving.
- If their back pain stops them from doing things such as sports or PE.
- If they feel unwell and/or have a high temperature or unexplained weight loss.
- If their pain is getting progressively worse.
- If they have pins and needles, numbness or weakness in their legs.
- If they start developing or complaining of stiffness or difficulty in moving.
- If they have pain at night.
- If they develop changes to their bladder and bowel habits.

What if I need pain relief?

To manage your pain and keep your back moving it is advised that you initially take regular simple pain relief. This can be bought over the counter from a pharmacist. If you have any allergies or conditions which affect the use of pain relief or any questions or concerns please seek advice from your GP or a pharmacist.

Rehabilitation and recovery

If you follow this advice leaflet your injury should take around 6-8 weeks for your pain to settle. However, everyone recovers at different rates and it is dependent on the severity of the pain and discomfort, the soft tissue that was involved and the presence of any other medical problems.

Initial exercises

Try and start working through the following exercises as soon as you can – it is safe to start trying these exercises straight away;



1. Lie on your back with your hands grasped behind one of your thighs, gently straighten your knee up until you feel a stretch behind your knee. Hold for a few seconds then bend your knee back down.



Repeat this 5-6 times before holding at the top for a 30 second stretch.

Repeat 2-3 times a day.



2. Lie on your back with one arm out to the side and your leg crossed over your body like in the picture. Hold the stretch here using the hand closest to your knee to help add a little more of a stretch.



Repeat 6-8 times a days.



3. Lie on your tummy with one knee bent hold your foot with your your hand and gently pull your heel down towards your bottom.



Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times a day.



4. Kneel on the floor with your bottom on your heels, feet together and knees a little apart. Slide your hands away from you as if you a pushing your armpits down towards the floor.

Repeat 3-4 times a day.

Exercises progressions

Start these exercises as soon as your movement has returned and your pain is starting to settle;



1. On all fours with your hips under your knees and hands under your shoulders.

First look upwards whilst letting your back arch and your tummy lower towards the floor before looking downwards between your knees whilst arching your back upwards like a cat.

Repeat 5-10 times a day.



2. Superman/woman

Take weight through your hands and knees whilst in four point kneeling on the floor.

Gently lift one arm and the opposite leg and stretch them outwards, hold this position for 5-10 seconds before returning to the start position. Repeat on alternate legs until you have completed 20 in total.



3. Dead Bug

Start by lying on your back with your hips and knees bent to 90 degrees and arms straight and pointing towards the ceiling. Flatten your lower back against the floor.

Lower one arm towards the floor over your head and at the same time straighten the opposite side leg. Bring the arm and leg back to starting position and repeat with the other side.

Repeat 3 times a day.



4. Squats are a very good exercise for your core, back and leg muscles.

Practice squatting but lifting your arms up above your head as you do so. If you have something you can hold between your hands as you lift them this is even better. You can use an exercise band, ball or broom handle. If it is uncomfortable to lift your arms whilst squatting just have your hands at your sides.

Repeat 3x10 times a day.

Return to sports and activity

Once your back is no longer painful and the movement is much better you can gradually return to all normal activities if you have had to reduce some due to your pain.

As your back continues to feel better you can gradually return to your usual activities like sports and PE ensuring you warm up and cool down fully.

If you feel as though you are able to, you do not have to wait for the go ahead from a health professional to return to your normal activities.

Do I require further treatment?

If you have been able to return to all normal activities and your pain has settled well you likely don't need any further treatment.

If you do have any concerns, ongoing pain or are struggling to return to your normal activities please call the physiotherapy department to speak with one of our physios and make a self referral.

Further advice

If you have followed all of the advice above and you are still struggling with your symptoms you can contact the physiotherapy department on details below.

Physiotherapy Team
Therapies Department,
Royal Hospital for Children and Young People,
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh
EH16 4SA

Telephone 0131 312 1079