

PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT



ACUTE BACK PAIN ADVICE

It is important to attempt to relieve acute back pain as soon as possible. Spending a short time resting may help save weeks of further problems.

Let your pain guide what you do, if you're uncomfortable sitting, get up and move around, if you are uncomfortable moving around lie down, but do try and vary your position every 20-30 minutes. As your pain eases, your back may feel stiff. It is safe to exercise into this stiffness.

1. Good resting positions

Experiment and use which ever you find to be comfortable

- Lying on your back with knees bent up and feet resting flat.



- Lying on your back with your legs bent up onto a stool or chair.



- Lying on your side with a pillow between your knees, add a small pillow under waist if required to keep spine straight.

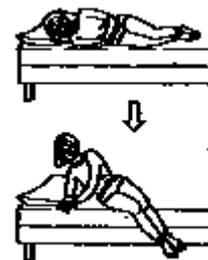


- Lying on your tummy with 1 – 2 pillows under tummy and one under your ankles.



2. Ease the strain of getting in / out of bed.

- Bend knees up one at a time. Roll onto your side. Drop feet over the edge of the bed. Sit up slowly, pushing on elbow then hand.
- Reverse this to lie down.



3. If you have been prescribed anti-inflammatory tablets by your GP take them regularly. This will help to settle down the inflammation and start the natural healing process and make movements easier. If you have simple painkillers e.g. paracetamol, or have been prescribed a painkiller, these can be taken to alleviate pain and allow you to start moving.
4. Start the following gentle exercises as soon as you can to help reduce stiffness in your low back. Remember, it is safe to move gently so you feel your back start to stretch.
 - a) Bridging: Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Gently draw in your lower tummy muscles. Lift your pelvis and lower back (gradually vertebra by vertebra) off the floor. Hold the position. Lower down slowly returning to



starting position. Repeat 10 times.

- b) Knee rolling: Lying on your back with knees together and bent. Slowly roll your knees from side to side keeping your upper trunk still. **Only go as far as comfortable. Repeat 10 times, 3 times per day.**



5. Use of either hot or cold. Do not try one straight after the other.

- If you have been prescribed an anti – inflammatory and ice pack would be helpful to reduce inflammation. Wrap a pack of frozen peas in a wet towel and place on the back for 15 minutes. It is best to put oil on the skin under the ice pack to avoid an “ice burn”.



- If you have a lot of muscle spasm or tightness in the back muscles, a hot water bottle may be helpful for 15 – 20 minutes.

6. **Avoid lifting when you have acute back pain. If you do have to lift, general reminders are:**

- Think how you are going to lift before attempting to lift.
- Suck in tummy muscles in preparation for lifting.
- Keep a wide base, bend knees and tuck in lowest tummy muscles, lift object in towards chest, straighten your legs and stand up.
- Try not to twist as you lift.

