

**If you require further advice please contact your GP or phone 111**

Seek help urgently if:

- You have difficulty in controlling or passing urine
- You notice numbness around your back passage or genitals e.g. when wiping yourself
- You lose control of your bowels
- You develop weakness in your legs
- You get pain down both legs at the same time

## Mechanical lower back pain

This leaflet can be made available in alternative languages / formats on request.

*如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式  
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供*

*Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona  
w innych językach/formatach.*

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## General Information

You have been seen by one of our clinicians and been diagnosed with mechanical or musculoskeletal back pain.

It's a common problem affecting the majority of us at some point in our life.

It might not feel like it when you attend the Emergency Department (ED), but most lower back pain will settle within a few weeks, especially if you follow the advice in this leaflet.

## Keep mobile

- When awake only sit or lie for 30 minutes before getting up and walking around.
- Do frequent small walks.
- When you sit try to maintain good posture. This will be easiest by sitting on high backed chairs rather than the sofa. Sit straight and imagine your head is being pulled up to the ceiling on a piece of string.

## Pain killers

Pain killers will help control the pain in the short term and often prevent the pain becoming persistent in nature.

- We recommend taking paracetamol regularly 4 times a day and ibuprofen 3 times a day. Please note that ibuprofen should not be taken if you suffer with kidney problems, asthma, stomach ulcers/reflux, heart failure or are pregnant.
- If you are prescribed co-codamol please note the following: it contains paracetamol so do not take other paracetamol based products, it contains codeine that can cause constipation and can impair your ability to drive.
- Only take these medications for a week before being reviewed by your GP as by this point your pain should be settling.

## Cold or heat

This is personal preference. In the acute phase of an injury (first 48 hours) ice can be a good pain killer. Place an ice pack over the lower back (within a tea towel) and apply for 5-10 minutes and repeat as often as you like. Heat is often better for ongoing back problems e.g. arthritis. This is why hot weather can alleviate aches and pains.

## Other important hints

- Lose weight: Every kilogram you are overweight puts extra strain on your back.
- Exercise: Consider swimming or even just walking up and down the pool.
- Once the pain has settled consider starting exercises to increase your core strength. Strong abdominal muscles support the back. BUT this needs to be done under instruction e.g. physiotherapy.
- Are your hamstrings too tight? If so these may be pulling on your back and might need stretching regularly. Again a physiotherapist will be able to advise.
- Lift things carefully. Bend at the knees and not at the back.
- If your symptoms are not settling after a week or two then you should self-refer to a physiotherapist, you can ask your GP how to do this.