

BACK PAIN

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?	6-12 weeks
HOW SERIOUS IS IT?	Mild
CAN I STILL WORK?	Yes - not manual

WHAT IS IT?

Low back pain describes tension, soreness and/or stiffness in the lower back, in most cases without a specific underlying cause. Low back pain affects 8 out of 10 people in the UK at some time in their life.



HOW DO I TREAT IT?

- Simple back exercises, improving your posture, yoga and Pilates can be helpful.
- Remain active as far as possible, even if you're uncomfortable. Don't stay in bed!
- Take the strain off your back by trying different sleeping positions.
- A hot bath or hot water bottle can ease pain from tense muscles, while cold from an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas can help relieve discomfort from sudden back pain.
- Try to avoid lifting heavy items.

MEDICINES:

'Rub-on' treatments and pain killers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective in most cases. Stronger medicines, such as codeine, are an additional option when simpler ones are not working; they are only for short term use and you should seek advice from your pharmacist first.

WHEN DO I NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION?

See your GP if your symptoms don't start to improve within three days, or if your back pain recurs regularly for more than six weeks or:

- You feel really unwell from your back pain.
- You have a fever (a temperature of over 38°C, or 100.4°F) as well.
- Your pain moves up into your chest.
- Your pain started after a major fall or an accident.

- Your pain affects your sleep.
- You become unsteady on your feet.
- You've been losing weight for no obvious reason.

The following should be treated as an emergency.

- **You feel numb or notice 'pins and needles' in the area around your bottom, your genitals, or down both of your legs.**
- **You lose control of your bowels.**