

When to seek help

When to seek help urgently

Back Pain

-what to do if you are in pain -

If your pain is very severe or it is stopping you from doing your basic day to day activities

Your pain is so severe you cannot work

You are having a lot of symptoms in your leg(s) such as pain, numbness or weakness

You have tried looking after the pain yourself for 3-4 weeks but are seeing no sign of improvement

If you have suddenly developed any of the following problems as well as your back pain, you must seek medical help immediately:

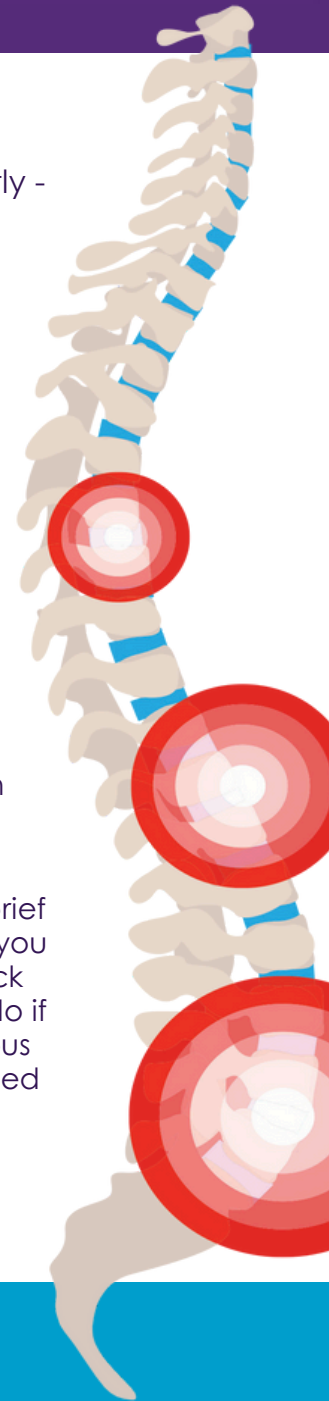
- You have difficulty controlling or passing urine
- You lose control of your bowels
- You have numbness around your back passage or your genitals
- You have severe weakness in your legs or are unsteady on your feet

First and most importantly - **do not panic!**

Low back pain is (unfortunately) an extremely common issue that will affect **approximately 80%** of us at some point during our lifetime.

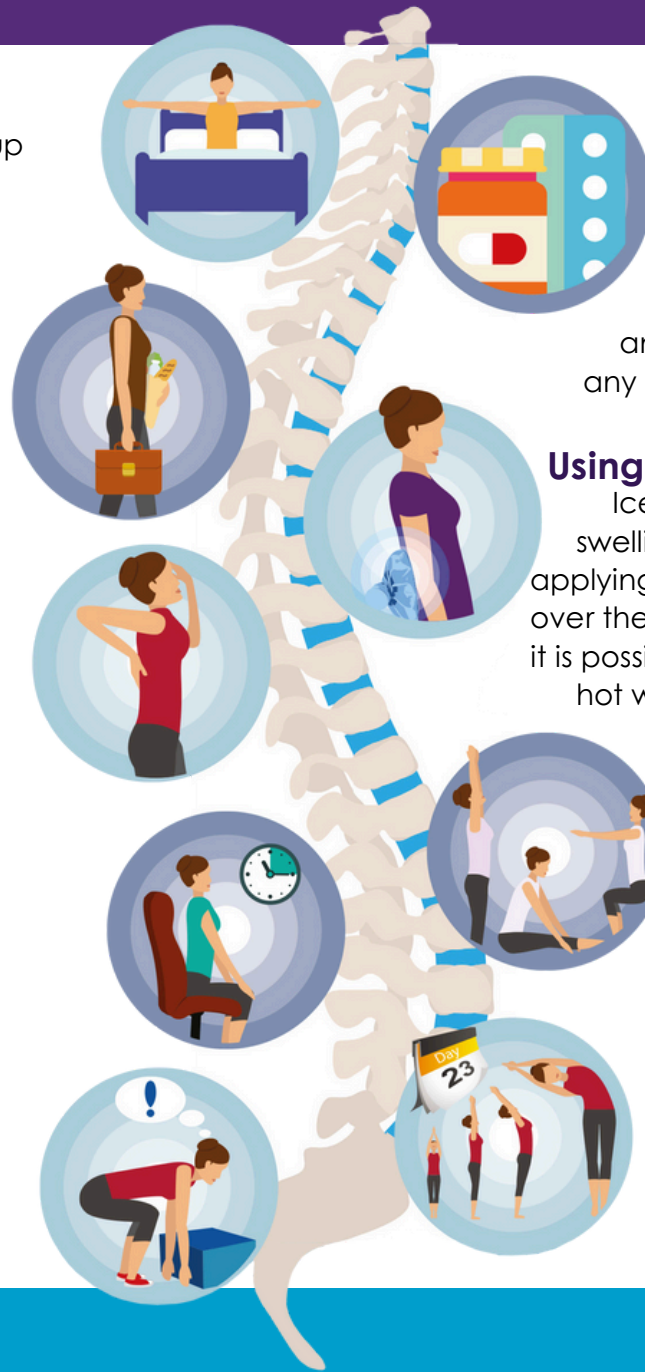
Whilst low back pain can be upsetting and inconvenient (as well as painful), it is **rarely caused by anything serious** and will generally improve with time and **simple self-treatment**.

Please read on for some brief tips on what to do should you have an attack of low back pain, along with what to do if you are having more serious symptoms, or are concerned that you are not making good progress.



We can help you to manage your back pain!

Back pain - what to do if you are in pain



Avoid bed-rest

The lack of movement can cause you to seize up which can make your pain much worse.

Keep reasonably active

Continue with your normal daily activities, you are not causing yourself harm by keeping active. Just make sure that you listen to your body - it will let you know if you are overdoing things.

Don't panic!

This is easy to say when you are not in pain, but there is evidence to show that if you are feeling very anxious or stressed (in general or about your back pain) this can make your pain worse.

Avoid staying in one position

It is best to keep changing positions frequently (every 15 minutes or so) to avoid seizing up.

Reduce activities in the early stages

In the early stages of your back pain try to reduce activities involving lifting or carrying heavy items.

Take anti-inflammatories to help reduce the pain

Over the counter anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen can help control pain. However, some people should not take these or may not react well to them, so always follow the package instructions and talk to your pharmacist or doctor if you have any concerns about what to take.

Using ice or heat can help with pain and stiffness

Ice is good for reducing pain associated with swelling and heat can be relaxing and ease stiffness. Before applying ice or heat make sure you can sense the temperature over the affected area (sometimes the skin can feel numb and it is possible to burn yourself). As a guide, wrap a reasonably hot water bottle or ice pack in a damp tea towel and apply for a maximum of 15 minutes, 3-4 times spaced out over the course of a day.

Back stretching exercises

Try some gentle back stretching exercises.

If your pain is improving...

Gradually increase your activity levels over a period of time and don't start doing everything you normally do at once!