

- Paracetamol is often sufficient if you take it regularly at full strength. For an adult, this is 1000 mg (usually two 500 mg tablets), four times a day.
- Anti-inflammatory painkillers. Some find that these work better than paracetamol. They include ibuprofen which you can buy at pharmacies or get on prescription. Other types such as diclofenac or naproxen will require a prescription.
- A stronger painkiller such as codeine is an option if anti-inflammatories do not suit or do not work well. Codeine is often taken in addition to paracetamol. Constipation is a common side-effect from codeine. This may make back pain worse if you need to strain to go to the toilet. To prevent constipation, have lots to drink and eat foods with plenty of fibre.

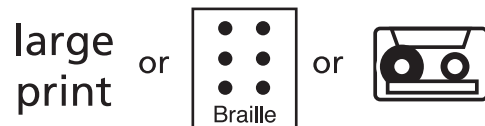
Some people may not be able to take anti-inflammatories. If you suffer with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure, or heart failure. Please always check with your GP or Pharmacist if you are unsure and always read the label before taking any medications.

Other treatments

Heat such as a hot bath may help to ease your pain.

You may also be referred for physiotherapy.

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Patient Information
and Guidance
**Non-Specific
Low Back Pain**



cause may be a sprain (an over-stretch) of a ligament or muscle. These causes of pain are impossible to prove by tests, which make it hard for a doctor to say exactly where the pain is coming from or exactly what is causing the pain.

In other cases the cause may be a minor problem with a disc between two vertebrae, or a small 'facet' joint problem between two vertebrae. There may be other minor problems in the structures and tissues of the lower back that result in pain.

For some, not knowing the exact cause of pain is unsettling but many people also find it reassuring to know that the diagnosis is not a serious problem of the back or spine.

Some Important Facts

Most of us (about 8 in 10 people) will have a bout of non-specific low back pain at some point in our life of which the severity can vary. It is very common and many people with back pain do not consult a doctor:

- Most non-specific back pains ease and go quickly, usually within a week or so.
- In about 7 in 10 cases, the pain has either gone or greatly eased within four weeks.
- In about 9 in 10 cases the pain has gone or has greatly eased within six weeks.

This information is for those who have non-specific low back pain. This information and guidance leaflet gives you the best and most up to date advice on what to expect and how to manage it.

What is non-specific low back pain?

Non-specific low back pain means that your pain is not due to anything specific or that any underlying cause can be found. In some cases the

Once the pain has eased or gone it is common to have further bouts of pain from time to time. Also, it is common to have minor pains 'on and off' for quite some time after an initial bad bout of pain.

What are the symptoms?

Pain may develop immediately after you lift something heavy, or after an awkward twisting movement, which can seem for no apparent reason at all, where as some simply wake up one day with low back pain.

Most people with a bout of non-specific low back pain improve quickly, usually within a week, sometimes a little longer. Once the pain has eased or gone it is common for you to have further bouts of pain from time to time in the future.

What can I do to help myself?

Exercise and keep going

Continue with normal activities as much as possible. This may not be possible at first if your pain is very bad. However, move around as soon as you are able, and get back to normal activities as soon as possible.

As a rule, don't do anything that causes a lot of pain, but don't be frightened of it either, you will have to accept some discomfort when you are trying to keep active. We recommend setting a new goal each day, for example, walking around the house on one day followed by a short walk to the shops the next.

Sleep

Sleep in the most naturally comfortable position on whatever is the most comfortable surface. There is no evidence to say that a firm mattress is better than any other type of mattress for people with low back pain. Some people find that a small firm pillow between the knees when sleeping on their side helps to ease night time symptoms.

Work

If you work, aim to get back to work as soon as possible, there is no need to wait for complete freedom from pain before returning to work. Returning to work often helps to relieve pain by getting back to a normal pattern of activity and provides a distraction from the pain.

In the past, advice had always been to rest until the pain eases, which we now know is incorrect. You are likely to recover quickly by getting moving again, and getting back to work as soon as possible. By doing this you are less likely to develop chronic persistent back pain if you keep active when you have pain rather than simply resting.

Medication

If you need painkillers, take them regularly, taking them 'now and again' just when the pain is very bad will give you peaks of pain. Whereas if you take them regularly the pain is more likely to be eased for much of the time and enable you to exercise, work and remain active.