

Back Pain

Back pain, particularly lower back pain, is very common. It usually improves within a few weeks but can sometimes last longer or keep coming back. There are things you can do to help ease the pain.

Causes of back pain

Back pain can have many causes. It's not always obvious what causes it, and it often gets better on its own. A common cause of back pain is an injury like a pulled muscle (strain). Sometimes, medical conditions like a slipped disc, sciatica (a trapped nerve) or ankylosing spondylitis can cause back pain. Very rarely, back pain can be a sign of a serious problem such as a broken bone, cancer or an infection.

How to ease back pain yourself

Back pain often improves on its own within a few weeks. There are things you can do to help speed up your recovery.

Do

- stay active and try to continue with your daily activities
- take anti-inflammatory medicine like ibuprofen – paracetamol on its own is not recommended for back pain but it may be used with another painkiller
- use an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) wrapped in a tea towel to reduce pain and swelling
- use a heat pack (or hot water bottle) wrapped in a tea towel to relieve joint stiffness or muscle spasms
- try doing some exercises and stretches for back pain

Don't

- stay in bed for long periods of time

See a GP if:

Your back pain does not improve after treating it at home for a few weeks

The pain is stopping you doing your day-to-day activities

The pain is severe or getting worse over time

You are worried about the pain or you are struggling to cope

Urgent advice: Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from 111 if:

You have back pain and:

- a high temperature
- you've lost weight without trying to
- there's a lump or swelling in your back or your back has changed shape
- the pain does not improve after resting or is worse at night
- the pain is made worse when sneezing, coughing or pooing
- the pain is coming from the top of your back (between your shoulders), rather than your lower back

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. These symptoms can be distressing for you but you don't necessarily need emergency medical attention. A rare but serious back condition, Cauda Equina Syndrome, can lead to permanent damage or disability and will need same day emergency medical assessment. The warning signs of Cauda Equina Syndrome include:

- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs or genitals
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks
- Altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate
- Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine
- Leaking urine or recent need to use pad
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty
- Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion
- Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse

Exercises and stretches for back pain

There are specific exercises and stretches you can do to help with back pain, but stop if your pain gets worse and see a GP for advice. Scan the QR codes below to link to the NHS website (which has links to further information about exercises for back pain) as well as the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care website (for general back pain advice and details on how to self-refer to Physiotherapy Services).

Treatments for back pain

If your back pain is severe or not getting better, a GP may prescribe painkillers or medicines to relax the muscles in your back. Other treatments may be recommended by your GP if your pain does not get better after a few weeks.



NHS website for back pain
exercises



Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care website for
back pain advice and details on self-referral to Physiotherapy
Services

Acknowledgements:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/>

NHS GIRFT. National Suspected Cauda Equina Syndrome (CES) Pathway

<https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/back-pain/>

If you need further advice, please contact the Emergency Department, details below

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:
Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>
www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743