

Patient Information Leaflet
Low Back Pain and Sciatica

What is it?

Low back pain is **very common** and what you do in the early stages is important
Sciatica is where the sciatic nerve, which runs from your lower back to your feet, is irritated or compressed

What are the symptoms?

There can be a range of symptoms such as:

- Pain - the pain may be stabbing, burning or shooting
- Tingling - like pins and needles
- Numbness
- Weakness

These symptoms can occur anywhere between your lower back to your toes. You can also have back pain with sciatica

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How long does it usually take to get better?

4-6 weeks, but it can last longer

What can I do to help relieve the pain?

The spine is one of the strongest parts of your body. The way it is put together it is designed for movement. It is surrounded by strong muscles and ligaments which support and protect the spine

- Carry on with your normal activities as much as possible, moving little and often within your pain range
- Adopt the 20minute rule – change your position every 20 mins, do not sit/stand/walk longer than 20mins. Moving will prevent the onset of stiffness and helps speed the healing
- Start gentle exercise as soon as you can – gentle slouching and arching your spine in sitting, knee hugging in lying, and trying to be symmetrical when standing

- Hold heat packs to the painful areas – you can buy these from pharmacies
- Ask your pharmacist about painkillers – NSAIDS like Ibuprofen are often recommended – Paracetamol on its own is unlikely to relieve your pain
- Put a small, firm cushion between your knees when sleeping on your side, or several firm pillows underneath your knees when lying on your back
- Try these exercises at home....<https://www.csp.org.uk/publications/back-pain-exercises>

Seek Physiotherapy help if you are not getting better with self-treatments

A physiotherapist will assess your body and determine why you are experiencing this onset of symptoms.

We often treat the cause and provide advice on what is needed to prevent the recurrence of symptoms.

Seek immediate medical attention (A&E) if you have any:

- Loss of sensation surrounding your bladder or bowel or inner thighs
- Recent onset of bladder dysfunction (such as urinary retention or incontinence)
- Recent onset of bowel incontinence
- Sensory abnormalities in the bladder or rectum
- Recent onset of sexual dysfunction