If you have any concerns about your ability to undertake aspects of you job role due to your back pain then speaking to your line manager may be helpful, or discussing with your manual handling team/health and safety team may enable short term adjustments to be supported within your role.

If the above advice has not helped in terms of managing your symptoms then you should speak to your doctor or refer yourself to see a therapist for support.

Warning Signs

If you suffer with severe pain that is getting worse over the weeks instead of better or you are feeling unwell with the back pain, then you should consult your GP. There are a few symptoms which can suddenly develop and should not be ignored: Difficulty passing or controlling urine, numbness in genitals or around your back passage, numbness or weakness in both legs or unsteadiness on your feet. Please remember these symptoms are very rare, the most important advice here is to get moving and keep moving.

By using the above advice, you can take back control over your pain and manage not only this episode of back pain, but any future episodes too.

Please contact our Working Well team for more information.
Opening hours - Monday to Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

Contact Details
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SEQOHS

WWforLowerback_004
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Staff health and wellbeing

WorkingWell

for low back pain management

NHS
Gloucestershire Health and Care
NHS Foundation Trust
Working Well
Your Occupational Health Service

Working Well for musculoskeletal care

Low back pain affects up to 80% of the population at some time in their lives. Most episodes start for no obvious reason, but are self-limiting and settle within days to weeks. The best treatment is to stay active and take pain killers as necessary. Low back pain is recurrent in nature; therefore, it is important to learn ho to manage your symptoms as once you have had one episode, you are likely to suffer another at some point in your life.

Managing low back pain

- Be active, whatever works best for you. Resting in bed does not help with back pain.
- Using simple pain relief as required to allow you to be active, you can seek advice from your local pharmacist or GP if necessary
- Don't stay in one position for too long, change position regularly.
- Use hot or cold (depending upon what helps most with the pain), both are acceptable in terms of managing pain.
- There is evidence to suggest that how you respond emotionally to having back pain can affect how quickly you get better. The more positive you are the quicker you will recover.

Your back is designed for movement, therefore the sooner you start everyday activities, the sooner you will feel better. Movement may be sore to start with therefore steadily increase your activity by doing a little more each day.

The benefits of exercise

- Helps to maintain flexibility and strength
- Helps with weight control
- Reduces stress
- Releases endorphins or 'feel good' hormones which act as natural painkillers

There is no one exercise that you should undertake, the best advice is to do what you enjoy most and is comfortable during a flare in symptoms. There are many forms of exercise which have helped people with back pain, examples include: Swimming, Walking, Yoga, Pilate's.
Remember that experiencing discomfort does not mean you are causing damage. The spine is strong and pain is rarely due to any serious disease or damage.

Low Back Pain at Work

Being at work is good for you and your back. Studies have shown the longer you are off work, the harder it is to return and the more likely you are to develop chronic pain. You do not need to be pain free to be at work. Work may increase your pain in the short term, but steps can be taken to support you while you are recovering. Changes to work area or duties can help manage your symptoms short term. Speak to your line manager about any concerns and they can refer you to Working Well for specialist advice if required.

Office Workers

Adopting a good posture and regular change of position will help to reduce strain on your back and help to relieve stiffness and tension. You should aim to get up and move away from your desk every hour. Completing a DSE Workstation assessment can support you in identifying any adjustments required to your workstation to improve comfort - You can access a copy of this from this weblink: **Display screen equipment (DSE) workstation checklist (hse.gov.uk)**

- Frequent short breaks are better than infrequent long breaks
- Change activity regularly e.g. if you are sitting, stand up and walk around. Make the most of natural breaks in your desk tasks
- Adjust your chair and screen to find a comfortable position
- Your forearms should be horizontal to the desk
- Your eyes should be level with the top of the screen
- Ensure there is plenty of space on and under your desk for free movement
- Avoid over-reaching
- A document holder may help to reduce awkward and repetitive neck movements when inputting information

Manual Workers

If your job requires regular moving of people or equipment then you may need to consider how to undertake these activities. The general principles to consider when moving things are:

- Can you use a lifting aid?
- Can you make the load lighter or less bulky?
- Can you grip the load securely?
- Can you reduce the distance from your start to finish point?
- Always ensure your route is clear