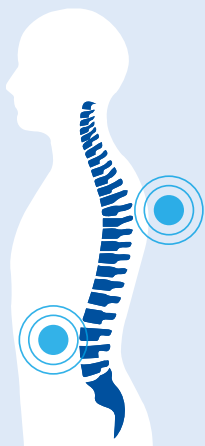


## Living and working with back pain



Back pain is very common. It affects around one third of the population and in a large proportion of cases it resolves itself without any specific intervention and is not related to any serious underlying problem.



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## Physiotherapy and back pain

If your back pain doesn't seem to be improving, and your GP is happy that there is no serious underlying cause, they may advise a short course of Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatories and/or a referral to a physiotherapist.

Physiotherapy assessment and treatment is available through the NHS. This assessment will normally take place at your local hospital or, in some cases, within the GP surgery itself. In some NHS Trusts it is possible to self-refer for physiotherapy and the receptionist at your surgery should be able to advise if this service is available.

Private medical insurance will normally cover physiotherapy to varying degrees, depending on the policy terms. The insurer will often require you to have been referred from your GP or treating Consultant.

If you do not have private medical insurance, and there is a long NHS waiting list, it's worth considering private physiotherapy. In some cases clinics will be able to provide assessment and treatment without any form of referral. You can find out how to locate private physiotherapists in your local area by visiting:

[www.csp.org.uk/your-health/find-physio/  
find-physiotherapist](http://www.csp.org.uk/your-health/find-physio/find-physiotherapist)

All physiotherapists should be registered with the Health Care Professions Council which is their regulatory body. All that is required is the therapist's surname in order to complete a search.

You can check to see if your physiotherapist is registered with the Health Care Professions Council by visiting:

[www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

## What to expect at the appointment

At the initial appointment, the physiotherapist will ask you about the onset of your injury or condition, as well as asking you about other medical conditions you may have, and questions about the symptoms you are experiencing relating to your back pain problem.

They will then carry out a clinical assessment of the symptomatic area or joint. This will usually include a variety of movements, or tests, to help ascertain what the diagnosis or injury may be and therefore what treatment or management is indicated.

At the end of the assessment the physiotherapist will generally be able to advise whether physiotherapy is likely to be beneficial or, alternatively, if further specialist referral or investigation is required. If this is the case, the physiotherapist will liaise directly with your GP to facilitate this process as most are not able to directly refer to Consultants or request investigations.

Most cases of back pain can be managed without investigation such as MRI scans or x-rays. These investigations can often produce misleading and false positive results.

If you'd like more information about how physiotherapy can assist in the management of back pain, as well as tips for helping yourself, you can visit:

[www.csp.org.uk/your-health/conditions/back-pain](http://www.csp.org.uk/your-health/conditions/back-pain)



## The importance of exercise

Exercise is an essential part of rehabilitation. If you have been assessed by a physiotherapist, it is likely you will have been provided with an individualised exercise programme.

If, however, you have not yet been able to access physiotherapy or are waiting for an appointment, there are some basic and easy to follow exercises you can try at:

[www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/back-pain/back-pain-exercises.aspx](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/back-pain/back-pain-exercises.aspx)

The site also has a booklet you can download, which gives you additional useful information on the structure of the spine, causes of back pain and recommended treatments.



## Maintaining good posture

Poor posture may be a contributing factor to back pain. It is important to ensure that your workstation is set up to enable good ergonomics. You can download the following leaflet, which give you advice on how to correctly set up your workstation.



You can download the leaflet by visiting:

[www.backcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Setting-up-your-Workstation-Factsheet.pdf](http://www.backcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Setting-up-your-Workstation-Factsheet.pdf)

## Specialist referral

Occasionally it is recommended that further investigations are required. The most common reason for this is if you are experiencing associated leg pain (sciatica) with signs of significant nerve compression (loss of sensation and muscle weakness in the leg or foot), which may require assessment by a spinal surgeon.



## When to seek urgent medical attention

There are a few specific circumstances where you should seek urgent medical attention. These circumstances are outlined in the website below, but are very rare.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/#when-to-get-immediate-medical-advice](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/#when-to-get-immediate-medical-advice)



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## Other useful resources

**Health and Safety Executive:** this site provides advice about managing back pain at work

[www.hse.gov.uk/msd/backpain/workers/work.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/backpain/workers/work.htm)

**National Institute of Clinical Effectiveness:** this site provides guidelines for management of back pain and Sciatica

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59)

**Spinal Pain terminology:** this document explains some of the terminology you might hear when dealing with back pain specialists

[www.backcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/801-Eurocrat-210910.pdf](http://www.backcare.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/801-Eurocrat-210910.pdf)

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