



# Acute Low Back Pain

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A guide to understanding  
Acute Low Back Pain



# What is Acute low back pain?

Low back pain is pain in the area between your ribs and your pelvis.

The pain can also spread to one or both legs. However the pain is centred more in your back than in your leg. **ACUTE** low back pain is low back pain that gets better within 12 weeks.

## Simple facts about Acute back pain

- Acute episodes of back pain are common.
- Don't worry - most episodes settle quickly without any specific treatment.
- Your Acute back pain should ease within 2 weeks and you should be much improved within 4-6 weeks.
- In general you don't need to seek urgent health care. Most episodes of Acute back pain get better with very little treatment.

## What should I do to help my Acute low back pain?

### 01. Keep Active

- The best treatment for Acute low back pain is to remain active and to return to your usual activities, including work and exercise as soon as your symptoms allow.
- If you do require time off work, it is important that you aim to return as soon as possible.
- X-RAYS and Scans are not routinely required for Acute episodes of back pain.
- If you are struggling to return to your normal activities, it is advised that you link in with your GP or a chartered physiotherapist for guidance.



### 02. Do I need pain relief?

- You may require simple pain medication to help manage your pain. Contact your GP as required.

### 03. When do I seek help?



**Though rare, there are certain circumstances where you should consider consulting your healthcare professional urgently.**

- If you suffered a fall or trauma that caused your back pain to start.
- If you have a history of previous cancer.
- If you are taking steroid tablets or have osteoporosis and experience sudden onset of back pain.
- If you have a fever or are generally unwell.
- If you develop difficulty passing urine, opening your bowels or numbness in your genitals or back passage.
- If you develop sexual dysfunction: change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate.
- If you develop weakness of the leg(s) that is getting worse.
- If you have developed severe low back pain that is not settling and is having a very significant impact on your ability to do your normal activities.

### 04. How do I prevent future episodes?

- Regular Exercise in your lifestyle helps minimise future episodes of back pain.
- Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy and are likely to stick with.
- 150 mins of moderate intensity exercise (slightly breathless) or 75 mins of vigorous exercise per week is recommended. 10,000 steps per day is the recommended step count if walking is your preferred exercise.
- Stretching exercises help maintain the flexibility and mobility of your back. See overleaf some simple back exercises. You should aim to do these a few days per week.



# BACK EXERCISES

## Knee to Chest Stretch

Gently pull both knees to your chest

HOLD

**10**  
seconds

REPEAT

**x2**



## Trunk Rotation Stretch

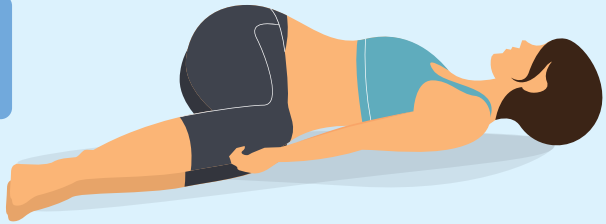
Gently roll your knees to floor with opposite arm out stretched.

HOLD

**10**  
seconds

REPEAT

**x2**  
each side



## Angry Cat Stretch

Arch and Hollow low back towards ceiling.

REPEAT

**x5**



## Press Up

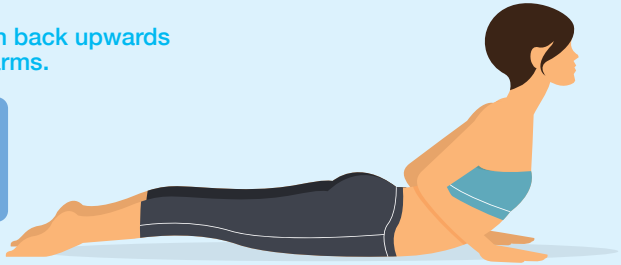
Lying on stomach. Arch back upwards towards ceiling using arms.

HOLD

**10**  
seconds

REPEAT

**x3**



## Mid Back Stretch

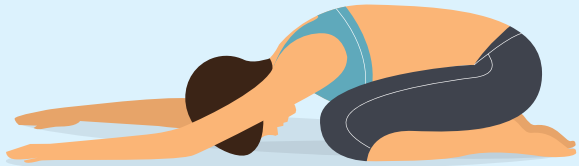
Sit on heels. Stretch your arms along mat, aiming to get as low as possible, keeping bum on heels.

HOLD

**30**  
seconds

REPEAT

**x1**



## Hip Stretch

Get into position as shown in picture. Feel the stretch in the front of the left hip region.

HOLD

**30**  
seconds

REPEAT

**x1**  
each side



# EXERCISE DIARY

<b>Back Exercises</b> (Min 4 times/week)		<b>Physical Exercise</b> e.g. Walking, Cycling, Swimming, Gym etc. GOAL: 150 mins/ week, Moderate Intensity 10,000 steps/day
<b>WEEK 1</b>		
MON		
TUES		
WED		
THURS		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		
<b>WEEK 2</b>		
MON		
TUES		
WED		
THURS		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		
<b>WEEK 3</b>		
MON		
TUES		
WED		
THURS		
FRI		
SAT		
SUN		

## Back Exercises

(Min 4 times/week)

## Physical Exercise

e.g. Walking, Cycling, Swimming, Gym etc.  
GOAL: 150 mins/ week, Moderate Intensity  
10,000 steps/day

### WEEK 4

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

SUN

### WEEK 5

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

SUN

### WEEK 6

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

SUN

# Key Messages

Back Pain is common and generally not due to serious injury



Keeping active & taking regular exercise from the outset is really important



Persistent back pain can be scary but don't worry, it should improve



Surgery is rarely needed for back pain



Back pain often gets worse due to fear, anxiety and lack of movement



If your symptoms are not improving, seek help but don't worry



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