

These may be comfortable resting positions for short periods.



**Mobilising exercises.** Do up to 10 times each at regular intervals (Eg 3 times per day). They can improve your pain but at most should only cause a mild increase in symptoms.

### 1. Lower back extension.

Keep hips down and push up with arms to arch your back, then lower body again.



### 2. Lower back stretch.

A good stretch for the back muscles. Pull both knees to the chest and hold briefly.



### 3. Mobilising exercise.

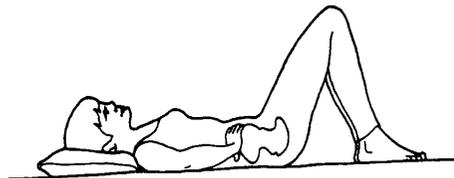
Roll your knees together from side to side.



© PhysioTools Ltd

### 4. Lower abdominal strengthening.

Commonly called abdominal bracing, because they act like a “brace” or corset to keep the back stable. Place the fingers inside the bony points of your pelvis at the front. Gently (about 40% effort) draw in the lower stomach towards the spine without breathing in. You should feel your lower abdominals contracting under your fingers. Hold the contraction for 3 breaths and build up to 10 reps.



## ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN

Acute low back pain, is generally pain that has been present for less than six weeks, and can be felt in the low back, buttocks or upper thighs.

**SIMPLE BACKACHE** is very common. More than 80% of the general population suffer from simple backache at sometime. The vast majority of cases show no signs of any serious damage or disease. A full recovery can be expected in days or weeks, but may vary. There is nothing to worry about.

No permanent weakness will occur. Recurrence is possible – but this does not mean re-injury.

### REFERRED PAIN OR NERVE ROOT PAIN.

This is more widespread pain which radiates into other areas of the back or legs. Pins and needles, areas of numbness and weakness may be associated with irritation of nerves from injured non bony parts of the spine.

There is no cause for alarm.

Appropriate rest, pain relief and then exercises usually settle symptoms– but may take a month or two.

Full recovery expected – recurrences may occur, but are less likely with correct back care and exercises.

## **WHAT CAUSES THE PAIN.**

When you experience back pain, the cause is likely to have been mechanical. This may be due to a sudden traumatic event or as a result of a series of minor incidences which gradually build up stress over time.

Common structures injured include the disc, ligaments, facet joints and spinal muscles. As a consequence of the mechanical disturbance there could be both pain around the site of injury or referred pain.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN**

### **Initial 24-48 Hours**

After a brief initial rest of 24 – 48 hours it is important to stay as active as possible and to continue normal daily activities (with correct technique).

This advice is for the short term only. A sudden attack of acute back pain can occur at any time. Do not ignore the pain – the body is telling you something is wrong. Stop what you are doing and find a more comfortable position. Initially rest can be beneficial.

Try lying face down on the bed or a firm surface, hands by the sides. This takes the pressure off the back. Apply an ice pack (or a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a damp towel) if you find it brings relief. Do not apply ice directly to the skin as it may cause a cold burn. Take pain killers at regular intervals (but no more than the recommended dose and always read the instructions).

## **48 Hours and After**

The general advice is to increase physical activities progressively over a few days or weeks. Activity is helpful, too much rest is not.

Learn the correct techniques for bending, twisting or lifting. The movement itself cannot damage you, it is only if you move incorrectly.

Sitting during the early stages is likely to be painful, so avoid sitting for more than a few minutes at a time until things improve. It is important to find a chair that is comfortable and supports your lower back. If necessary use a cushion or small pillow to provide the level of support you need.

If you are working it is most beneficial to stay at work or return to work as soon as possible.

## **ADVICE ABOUT ACTIVITY AND EXERCISES**

1. Should be done regularly.
2. Always start out gently.
3. Increase the intensity gradually.
4. A little pain during exercise is OK. Pain does not necessarily mean damage.
5. Exercise should not cause pain that lingers.
6. Activity or exercises that cause a worsening of leg symptoms should not be done.