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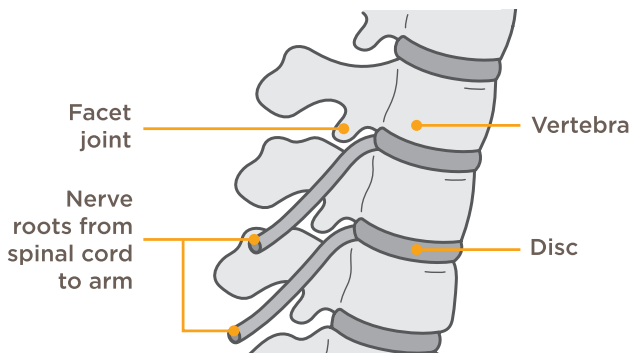
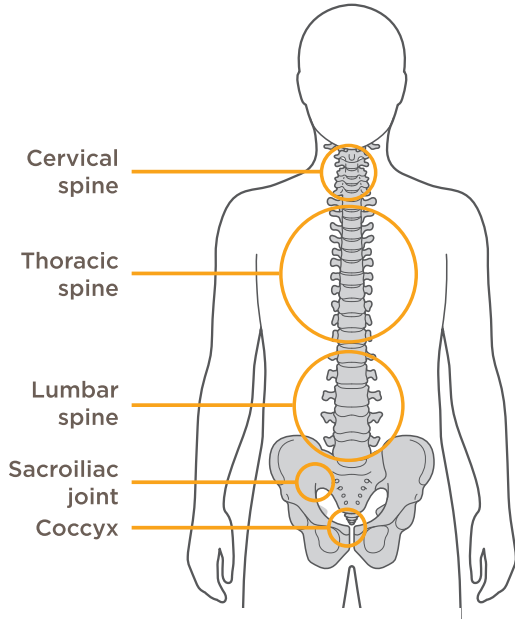


# BACK PAIN



## How does the back work?

The back is a complicated structure built around the bones of the spinal column. The spinal column consists of 24 bones (vertebrae) sitting one on top of another. It sits on the pelvis and is topped by the skull. The bones of the spine are connected by discs at the front and facet joints at the back. The discs help to absorb loads on the spine and, with the facet joints, give the spinal column its flexibility.



## What causes back pain?

### Sprains and strains

Back pain isn't usually a sign of a serious medical condition – it's much more likely that an awkward movement has pulled a muscle or sprained a ligament. Simple cases often improve within four to six weeks. Staying active and getting on with normal activities is one of the best ways to deal with back pain, but you can take painkillers if you need to. It's very important to exercise the affected muscle to improve its strength, although you should rest if the muscle is in spasm. Unless you're in severe pain you probably won't need to see a doctor.

### Sciatica

Back pain is sometimes linked with pains in the leg which are called sciatica. It affects the sciatic nerve that runs from the spine to the leg. The pain is felt anywhere from the buttock to the big toe. Other symptoms include numbness and tingling in the legs and feet.

Sciatica is caused by an irritation of the sciatic nerve – there's nothing wrong with the leg itself. If you notice weakness of the muscles in your leg, especially if you can't pull your foot up towards you, or if you lose bladder or bowel control, you should see your doctor urgently.

## What can be done to help?

### Exercise

**Exercise is the most important way that you can:**

- Ease stiffness and pain
- Build up muscle strength and stamina
- Improve your flexibility and general fitness

If your back pain lasts a while, lack of movement can cause the muscles to become weak. This makes it more likely that you'll strain them in future. It's important that you don't rest for too long and keep moving.

### Medication

Painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen may help and you should use them if you need to. Take them regularly and at the recommended dose to help

you control pain and allow you to continue exercising. Don't wait until your pain is severe before taking painkillers.

You shouldn't take ibuprofen or aspirin if you're pregnant or have asthma, indigestion or an ulcer until you've spoken to your doctor or pharmacist. Medication can have side-effects so you should read the label carefully and check with your pharmacist if you have any queries.

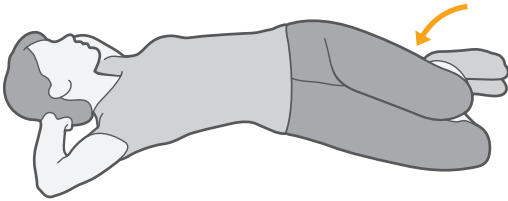
### Physiotherapy

If your back pain is affecting your activity and is persisting, ask your GP about referral to a physiotherapist. Physiotherapy can help you to manage pain and improve your strength and flexibility. A physiotherapist can provide a variety of treatments, help you understand your problem and get you back to your normal activities. They can also give advice on how you can prevent symptoms returning in the future, for example by teaching the correct way to lift heavy objects.

### Simple exercises

#### Back stretch

Lie on your back, hands above your head. Bend your knees and roll them slowly to one side, keeping your feet on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat three times on each side.

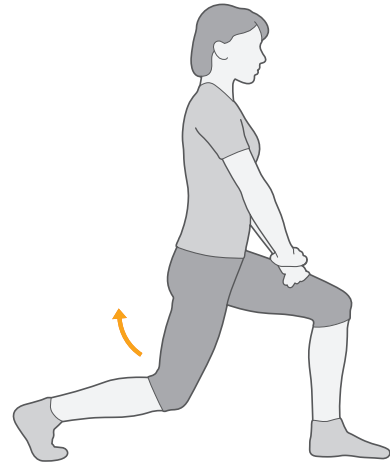


NB: Upper knee should be directly above lower knee.



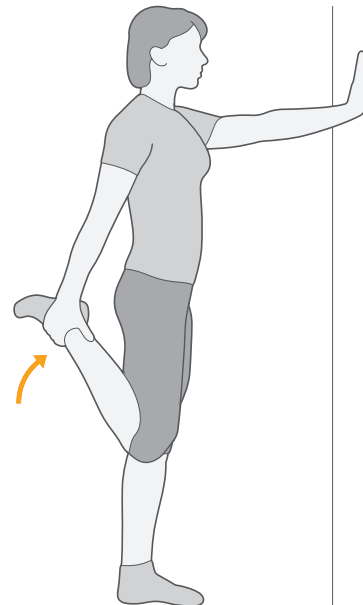
### Deep Lunge

Kneel on one knee, the other foot in front. Facing forwards, lift the back knee up. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three times on each side.



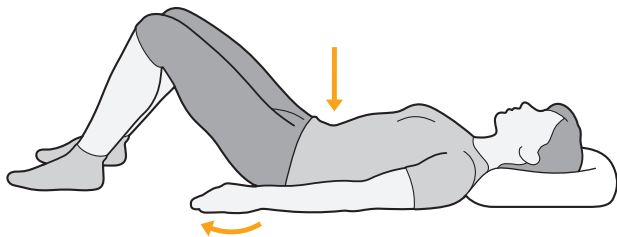
### One-leg stand (front)

Holding onto something for support if needed, bend one leg up behind you. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three times on each side.



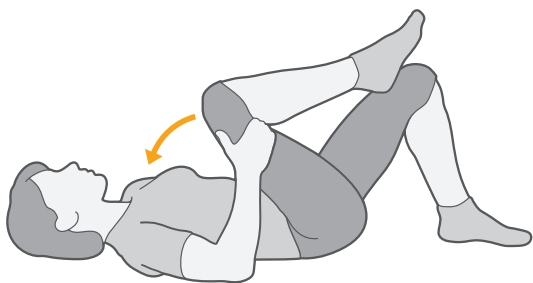
### Pelvic tilt

Lie down with your knees bent. Tighten your stomach muscles, flattening your back against the floor. Hold for five seconds. Repeat five times.



### Knees to chest

Lie on your back, knees bent. Bring one knee up and pull it gently into your chest for five seconds. Repeat up to five times on each side.



### LOW BACK PAIN

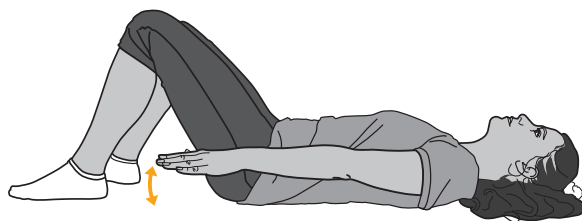
#### Strengthening exercises

Hundreds

- **Level 1:**

Starting position: rest position

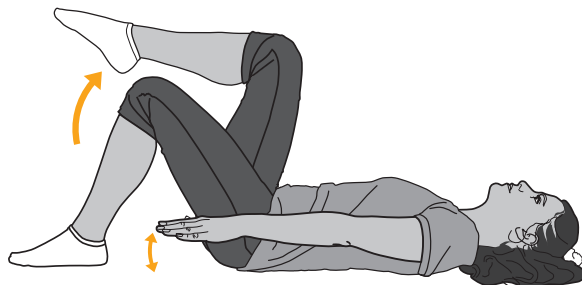
- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and pulse arms up and down in a small arc of movement
- Inhale for five arm movements and exhale for five arm movements for up to 100 arm movements



- **Level 2:**

Starting position: rest position

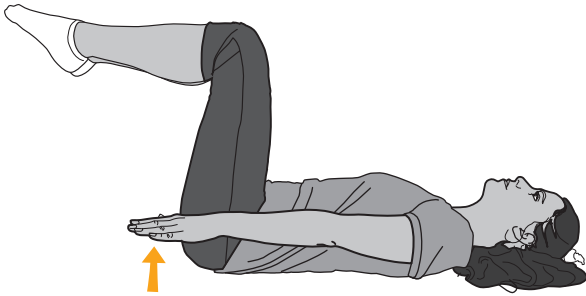
- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and raise the right knee over the right hip
- Hold the position. Pulse the arms up and down in a small arc of movement. Inhale for five arm movements and exhale for five arm movements for up to 100 arm movements
- On fifth breath out lower the right leg to the mat
- Repeat on the left leg



• **Level 3:**

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and raise the right knee over the right hip
- Inhale to hold the position
- Exhale and raise the left knee over the left hip and adduct hips
- Hold the position. Pulse the arms up and down in a small arc of movement. Inhale for five arm movements and exhale for five arm movements for up to 100 arm movements
- Exhale and lower the right leg towards the mat
- Inhale and hold this position
- Exhale and lower the left leg towards the mat



**One leg stretch**

• **Level 1:**

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, slide the left heel forwards along the floor away from the sitting bone
- Inhale, slide the left heel back along the floor towards the sitting bone to resume neutral spine starting position
- Repeat 10 times alternating legs

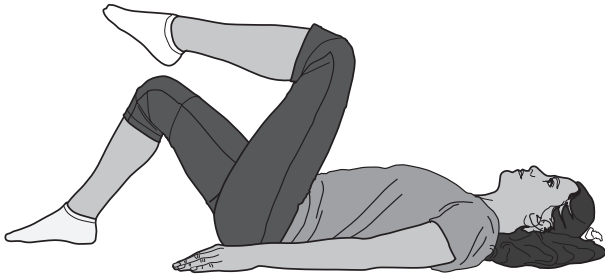


• **Level 2:**

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, float the left leg into the tabletop position
- Inhale and hold this position
- Exhale, extend the left leg forwards and upwards on a diagonal line
- Inhale, fold the left leg back into the tabletop position
- Exhale, lower the left leg to the mat to resume neutral spine starting position
- Repeat 10 times, alternating legs



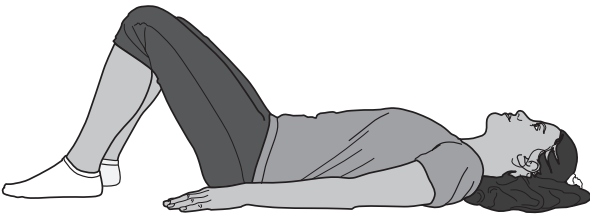


## Scissors

### • Level 1:

Starting position: rest position

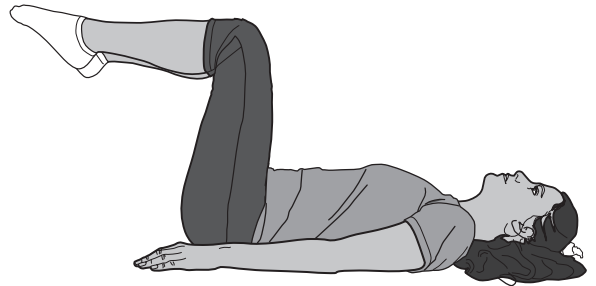
- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, slide the right foot inwards towards the sitting bone and then float this leg into the tabletop position
- Inhale hold this position
- Exhale lower the right leg to the mat to resume neutral spine starting position
- Repeat 10 times, alternating legs



### • Level 2:

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, slide the right foot inwards towards the sitting bone and then float this leg into the tabletop position
- Inhale hold this position
- Exhale, slide the left foot inwards towards the sitting bone and then float this leg into the tabletop position
- Inhale hold this position
- Exhale lower the right leg and tap the tips of the toes on the mat
- Inhale and lift this leg back into tabletop
- Repeat 10 times alternating legs, then lower on leg to the mat at the time



• **Level 3:**

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale, slide the right foot inwards towards the sitting bone and then float this leg into the tabletop position
- Inhale and hold the right leg in the tabletop position
- Exhale, lower the right leg to the mat
- Simultaneously, float the left leg into the tabletop position
- Repeat 10 times alternating legs

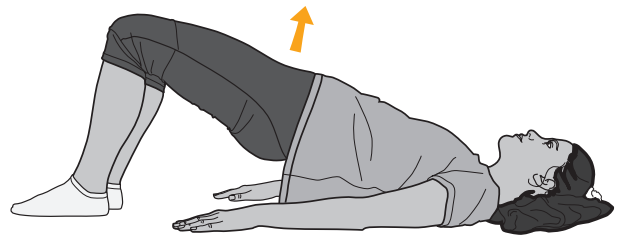
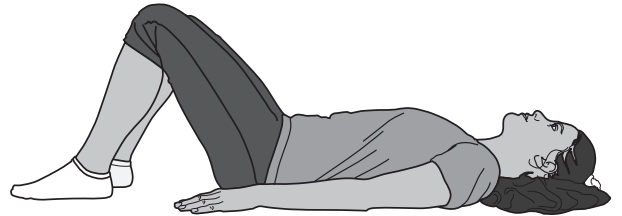


**Shoulder bridge**

• **Level 1:**

Starting position: rest position. Place small ball between knees.

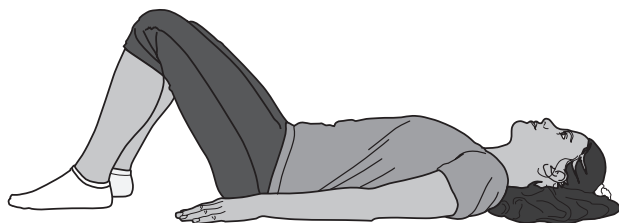
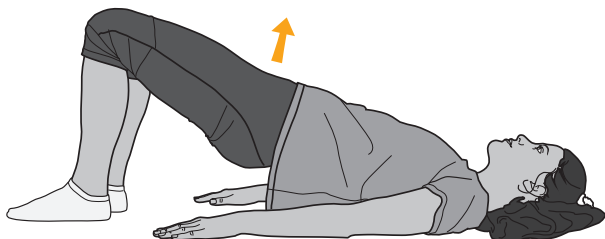
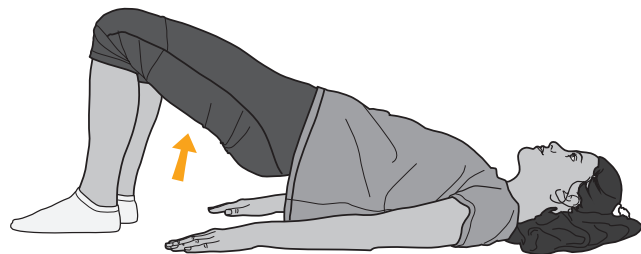
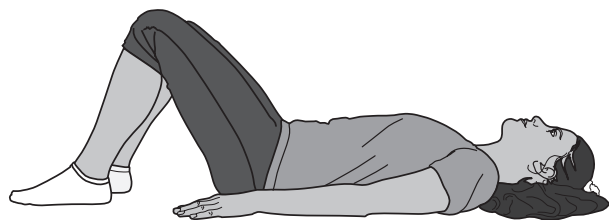
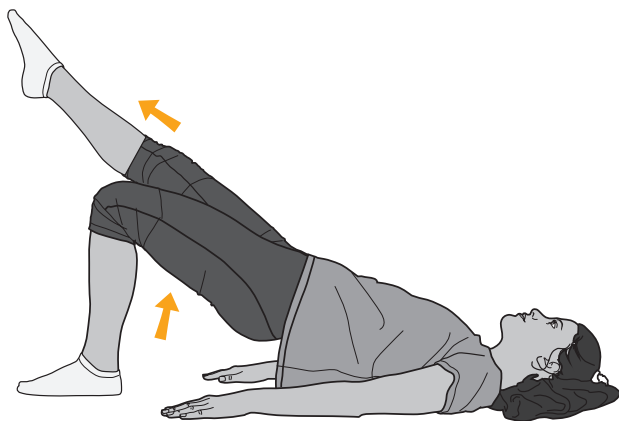
- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and gently roll the lower back into mat, lift the tailbone upwards towards the ceiling and continue to peel your spine off the mat, bone by bone until you are resting on your shoulder blades
- Inhale and hold this position
- Exhale and lower the shoulder bridge by drawing the breastbone downwards towards the mat, continue to peel your spine back onto the mat bone by bone until the tailbone connects the mat and the spine returns to neutral
- Repeat 10 times



• **Level 2:**

Starting position: rest position

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and gently roll the lower back into mat, lift the tailbone upwards towards the ceiling and continue to peel your spine off the mat, bone by bone until you are resting on your shoulder blades
- Inhale and hold this position
- Exhale and extend your left leg forwards, reaching for the wall in front of your body
- Inhale and bend this leg back to the floor to resume the shoulder bridge position
- Exhale as lower the shoulder bridge by drawing the breastbone downwards towards the mat, continue to peel your spine back onto the mat bone by bone until the tailbone connects the mat and the spine returns to neutral
- Repeat 10 times, alternating legs





## Clam

### • Level 1:

Starting position: Side lying. Underneath arm is outstretched in alignment with the trunk with your head resting on this arm. Hips bent up to approx. 45 degrees and knees bent up to approx. 90 degrees. Shoulders and hips stacked one on top of the other. Top hand resting on the floor. Draw the top hip downwards away from the top shoulder to create a small space between your waist and the mat.

- Inhale to prepare. Gently draw the sitting bones towards one another to engage the gluteals
- Exhale and lift the top knee upwards, keeping the feet together
- Inhale and hold the position
- Exhale and lower the top knee onto the bottom leg
- Repeat 10 times on each side



### • Level 2:

Starting position: align the body as for the Level 1. Then lift both feet into the air approx. 20cm, keeping them stacked. Hold the feet in this position.

- Inhale to prepare
- Exhale and lift the top knee upwards, keeping the feet together and lifted off the mat
- Inhale and hold the position
- Exhale and lower the top knee onto the bottom leg, keeping the feet together and lifted off the mat
- Repeat 10 times on each side



## Summary

- Back pain is common but most cases aren't caused by a serious problem
- Most cases of back pain get better on their own within a few weeks
- Stay active. Bed rest for more than a couple of days makes it harder to get going. Gradually increase your normal activities and do regular exercise
- Take painkillers if needed so you can stay active

Your pain should ease within two weeks and you should recover over approximately a four to six week period.

You should carry on with the exercises for at least six to eight weeks to help prevent another injury.

If the pain is severe or not improving after a week or so, contact your doctor.

