

Top Tips For Back Pain

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This advice sheet is designed to be used in conjunction with your osteopathic treatment.

Posture control

Avoid sitting and standing as much as possible. So where you would normally stand, try walking. Where you would normally sit, try lying. This means lying down in the evening to watch TV (not sitting). When lying down avoid the “bathtub” position, ie lying but propped up with several pillows. Similarly, avoid recliner chairs – they put a similar force on your spine.

Increase Sleep

Best healing takes place during sleep. It makes sense to increase the amount of sleep during recovery. This is not to be

confused with lying down during the daytime (which does have benefits but is not as powerful). Even one hour more the good side of midnight will do wonders.

Sleeping posture

We always advise patients to sleep on the non-painful side. A pillow between your knees can help ease pain. If on your back, try a pillow under the knees. Lying on your stomach is not recommended as it is a known aggravator of back pain. However if you absolutely have to, use a large pillow under your tummy so your back arches up.

Sitting

- *Sit Less. Move More*

Movement is King. Sitting for extended periods is like a sack of potatoes squashing down on the injury. As that’s not enough when we slouch, the disc pings backward, further aggravating the wound.



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Sitting

- Work Desk

To help with posture, consider a sit-stand desk. Alternating between sitting and standing gives your muscles a little rest. Similarly, using different chairs at your desk may also help. By engaging in different postures, it allows different muscle groups to work and then rest in alternation. This way it reduces putting all the work on one set of postural muscles. But do remember avoiding the desk is the best solution of all.

When sitting, using a back brace may help. This option is not appropriate for all back pains, so please ask us first.

Take breaks from your desk as little as every 15 minutes if you need to. Try to alternate between lying down, walking and working.

Sitting

- Laptops & Phones

Try to avoid using these, as these can induce bad posture. If you have to use your laptop, we suggest getting a laptop stand, with a separate keyboard to use it like a PC.



Sitting

- Driving

Try to be the passenger. If not, try and make sure the knees are at, or below, hip level. When the knees rise above the level of the hips, it puts extra strain on the back. Keep adjusting the seat during your journey, take the seat forward, backward, move the backrest too. If very uncomfortable we recommend a product such as BackFriend.

Bathtime

Choose showers in place of baths. The bathtub position can put strain on the spine, the hot water softens the muscles. This all makes for the spine to "sag" under its own weight, potentially leading to more back strain, inflammation, muscle spasm and pain.

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Bending Lifting and Twisting

Try to bend from the knees. Bending and twisting from the waist will weaken the spine, as the fibres of the disc run obliquely. Things like loading the dishwasher, picking things from the floor, putting on clothing, lifting bags etc are higher risk activities.

When lifting, keep the object close to your naval, or carry on the hip bone of the good side. Avoid using rucksacks as ultimately the weight will be forced through the weakened part of the spine.

Walking

Walking keeps the spine strong and the back safe. Walking within your pain-free limits will help make a big difference to the speed of healing. A round trip of about 20 mins is a good start, though it may be a lot less if you are in acute pain. Walking on grass and uneven grass (ie a field or a common) is usually best.

If you return from a walk and are in more pain or the pain has travelled down the leg etc, it means the walk was too long for you. Next time walk less. In acute cases of back pain we recommend wearing training shoes to help cushion the walk. Avoid hard leather work shoes. The idea is to absorb the impact of heel-strike when walking.

Coughing & Sneezing

Try and hold onto a chair back or something solid to dissipate the force. If you have no choice, try bracing yourself by holding your own back.

Relaxation

-Body

Relaxation does NOT mean sitting in a chair - any chair. Lying down is needed. Being off weight-bearing means the back has a chance to heal, without the extra load of the body bearing down on the injury. You may wish to keep a yoga mat or a camping mat to hand with a pillow.

Relaxation

-Mind

Stress and emotion can play a big part in back pain. If possible, try to avoid getting (re)-involved with stressful people / situations. If needed phone a friend you like, who makes you laugh, someone who is positive etc. A walk in the park or woods can also be emotionally freeing. Think about distracting yourself by playing music, watching a video etc.

