

## ADVICE SHEET FOR ACUTE LOW BACK PAIN

### *The Facts*

- Most back pain settles with time.
- The spine is very strong.
- Backs are designed to move.
- If you try to keep moving you have a better chance of recovery.
- Bed rest is not a treatment for back pain.
- Back pain can be very severe, and you may need to reduce your activities at first.
- Stress and tension can increase the pain you feel.
- If you do not use your back it will quickly get out of condition.
- If you have to lie down because your back is very painful, you must try to get moving after a day or two.
- X-rays and scans are rarely required for back pain

### *What can I do to help myself?*

This depends on how severe your pain is.

- If you are taking painkillers or anti-inflammatories, take them regularly as prescribed, usually for a day or two but you may need to take them for a little longer. Don't wait for the pain to get out of control before you take them. You may want to speak to a pharmacist or your GP to get advice about which medication is best for you.
- If your pain is very severe, you may need to rest for a few days, but this is not a treatment. You need to get moving as soon as you can.
- Change position regularly. Try not to stay in one position for more than 20-30 minutes.
- Some people find that applying hot (20 minutes) or cold (10-20 minutes) packs helps their pain. If using a cold pack, always place a damp towel over your skin before placing cold pack on.
- Try to stay active, but you may need to reduce or stop some activities at first.
- You should gradually build up your activities and exercises over a few days or weeks. Don't wait for the pain to disappear before you start moving - the sooner you get going, the better you will feel.
- Try to stay at work, if possible.
- General exercise and physical fitness are very important and help you recover. Walking, cycling and swimming (vary the strokes) are good activities to build up gradually.

*Try to stay positive - there is a lot you can do to help yourself.*

*Remember most back pain settles with time.*

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