

# 5 simple things you can do to help your back pain

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## Introduction

Physiotherapy is an evidence-based form of treatment for lower back pain that can provide relief from pain and help improve overall function. It is a non-invasive form of care that helps to reduce inflammation, improve mobility, and strengthen the muscles around the

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spine. Physiotherapists are trained in a variety of techniques and therapies to help manage lower back pain, including manual therapy, exercise therapy, and education on lifestyle modifications. The benefits of physiotherapy for lower back pain include improved range of motion, decreased pain levels, increased strength and flexibility, improved posture and balance, reduced risk of further injury or re-injury, improved quality of life.

Here are 5 simple things you can do today to help your back pain:

### **1. Keep moving.**

The temptation with back pain is to think that if you stop and rest then you will recover quicker, makes sense right? Stopping in the short term when you suffer acute pain (e.g. the type of sharp pain that can stop you in your tracks) is fine and we would not recommend trying to continue with sport or exercise through this type of pain, however, you want to return to some form of movement as soon as you can. There are a couple of very good reasons for this, the first being that movement can help to reduce the sensation of pain (1).



Movement can help to reduce pain by tapping into the body's own pain relief chemicals to

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help reduce how severe pain feels and in addition to this movement and exercise are important ways to improve sleep, reduce stress and improve mood, all things that have been shown to influence pain (2). The second is that movement can ultimately be altered by pain (3). Reducing and altering how you move after suffering acute pain is appropriate to prevent further injury however if this altered movement is maintained in the long term or exercise is avoided altogether then this could lead to further complications for example pain in other areas.

## 2. Complete a self assessment.



When we say this you'll be pleased to know its way less complicated and time consuming than your tax return! What we are talking about here are a few things you can think about, and change if needed, that may be contributing to your back pain and/or delaying your recovery. Firstly, has anything changed recently? Are you completing a new role at work or have you just started exercising after a layoff? These are just examples however if there is anything that has changed in your life recently then it could be a contributing factor.



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Secondly, do you, like most of us, work at desks or in awkward positions (think plumber having to get under sinks)? We are not expecting anyone to change their job however is there anything you can do to make your work environment better? For those that work at desks this could mean checking your set up, is the chair the right height? Are you at the right distance from the screen? Are you taking regular breaks from your position? This type of self assessment can help you to identify simple changes you can make straight away that can then help to improve your back pain.

### **3. Think about extra factors**



There are many things that can influence pain and recovery and not all are purely physical. When recovering from injury the other things that are really important to consider are sleep, stress and nutrition.

Sleep, in particular, is often overlooked as a crucial component of our overall well-being, but its importance cannot be overstated, especially when it comes to recovery. Whether you have been pushing your body to the limits in physical activity or dealing with chronic pain, getting sufficient sleep can significantly aid in the recovery process.

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One of the key benefits of sleep for recovery is its ability to promote healing. During sleep, our bodies undergo various restorative processes that help repair damaged tissues and cells. This is particularly important for athletes or individuals engaged in intense physical activities, as adequate sleep allows their muscles to recover and rebuild after strenuous workouts.

Furthermore, sleep plays a vital role in reducing inflammation and pain. Studies have shown that lack of sleep can increase sensitivity to pain, making it more challenging for individuals to manage discomfort. On the other hand, quality sleep has been found to have analgesic effects, helping alleviate pain and improve overall well-being.

It is evident that prioritizing quality sleep is not just a luxury but a necessity when it comes to promoting recovery. Whether you are an athlete seeking peak performance or an individual managing chronic pain, ensuring sufficient rest can make all the difference in your journey towards optimal health and well-being.

#### **4. Don't be afraid to use pain relief.**

That's right, don't be afraid to use pain relief. There, we said it. Now, we understand people's concerns about using pain relief (becoming dependent, masking the problem among others) but we are not advocating long term use of pain relief. What we are suggesting is the strategic use of pain relief to help improve your overall condition. For example, if pain is preventing you from sleeping then the use of pain relief to enable this would be useful. As we have mentioned, sleep is the time when the body is naturally replenishing and restoring and if this is not optimal then it will hinder your ability to recover and so short term use of pain relief would be beneficial in this instance. Another good example of when to use pain relief would be to help give you a window which will allow you to engage in activities (movement, exercises) that aid overall pain relief. We are great advocates of movement and its benefit for pain relief but we are also aware that many patients can struggle with basic movement because of pain.



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## 5. Get Help



So, you've read tips 1-4 and maybe even tried some of them already. You may even have seen benefits from taking some of the steps already outlined but you're still in pain and that's still hugely frustrating. What do you do now?

This is the point at which you should seek help and guidance from a professional. A good physiotherapist will be able to complete a thorough assessment, picking out the likely areas contributing to your pain and from there formulate a plan that they can then guide you through to speed your recovery. What's more a good physiotherapist is able to provide reassurance that you are doing the right thing, you're making progress and help to troubleshoot any problems that arise on your road to recovery. This is

essential as it is so easy to become disheartened during rehab as it can be hard to see just how far you may have already come.

This is what our team at Performance Matters Physiotherapy love, the opportunity to help you problem solve and become the guide to help you move from frustrated and in pain to strong, confident and performing at your best... whatever that means to you!

If you would like to know more about our services and how they can help you send a message to 07575 213627 quoting 5 Things and one of our team will give you a call!