

Heathgate Medical Practice Self-care leaflet – Back pain

This range of leaflets created by our clinical team provide useful information on a range of conditions that can in most cases be managed by patients at home. Where symptoms persist after a period of self-care or after advice from the local pharmacist, you should consider calling the surgery.

Back pain is very common. It can be felt anywhere along the spine, from the neck down to the hips. It usually gets better on its own within a few weeks or months.

What can I do to help myself?

Here are some simple tips:

- Stay as active as possible and try to continue your normal daily activities.
- Try gentle stretching and exercise such as walking, swimming, yoga and Pilates.
- Use a hot or cold compression pack for short term relief. A hot water bottle or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel make good compression packs.
- Take anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen, checking first the medicine is safe for you to take bearing in mind other regular medication you are taking. A pharmacist is the ideal person to consult with for such advice.

When should I seek medical advice?

You should seek immediate medical advice if you have back pain and you are experiencing:

- Numbness or tingling around your genitals or buttocks.
- Loss of bladder or bowel control.
- Chest pain.
- A high temperature or fever of 38c or above.
- Unexplained weight loss.
- A swelling or deformity in your back.
- Pain which is noticeably worse at night.

You should also seek medical attention if you are experiencing back pain after a serious accident such as a road traffic accident.

These symptoms could be a sign of something more serious and need to be checked out by a clinician.

When should I contact a healthcare professional with persistent back pain?

You should seek advice when:

- There is no improvement after a few weeks.
- You are unable to continue your regular day to day activities.
- Your pain is becoming severe or progressively getting worse.
- You are worried about the pain or struggling to cope.

Further advice on back pain is available at www.nhs.uk