

## Back pain

Lower back pain is a common condition that can cause pain in the back, buttocks and in the legs. The cause of the pain may be due to muscle strain, a slipped or prolapsed disc or bony degenerative disease also called osteoarthritis. This information sheet explains how you can help to relieve your pain:

- Avoid sitting or standing for prolonged periods.
- **Rest.** Rest lying down flat in whatever position you find most comfortable, on a firm bed or on a mattress on the floor. When rising from lying down, turn onto your side, swing your legs over the edge and push yourself up sideways with your back straight.
- **Mobilise.** Start moving around as soon as you can and as much as possible.
- **Posture.** To relieve the strain on your back, keep your back straight and use your knees as much as possible when lifting or bending down.
- **Lifting.** When in acute pain, **do not do any lifting.** Use the correct lifting technique by keeping your back straight and bending at your knees. Ask your safety officer or physiotherapist to show you. (If we feel you will benefit from physiotherapy we will advise your GP to refer you).
- **Warmth.** If you have muscular spasm, a warm (**not hot**) pack applied to your back or a warm bath may help relax your back.
- **Pain relief.** Painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen are often very effective for back pain. You can buy these at a chemist without a prescription or your doctor may prescribe stronger medication such as diclofenac. Check the painkillers will not react with any other medications you are taking and follow the instructions on the packet
- **Toilet.** Try to avoid straining when going to the toilet as this may increase your pain. Try to eat plenty of fibre and drink two litres (about eight mugs) of liquid per day. If you become constipated you may need to discuss this with your GP.

**St Thomas' Hospital**  
**Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department**  
**Tel: 020 7188 2153**

**Urgent Care Centre**  
**Tel: 020 7188 7188 ext 59046**

**Guy's Hospital**  
**Minor Injuries Unit**  
**Tel: 020 7188 8088**

If you need more information or advice, please feel free to contact us on the relevant telephone number above. Alternatively **NHS direct** offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses 24 hours a day. Telephone **0845 4647** or visit **[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)**.