

Back Injury Advice

You have been seen and assessed by an Emergency Medicine Clinician today. You may or may not have had an x-ray as part of your assessment. In most cases of back injury, an x-ray is not needed. Acute back injury is a common problem and is usually caused by strain of muscle or sprain of ligaments. It improves over a few days or weeks. The most important things to do are described below.

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
• Try heat packs – be careful and don't use hot water bottles/heat directly on your skin as they can burn • If heat doesn't work try ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for 15-20 minutes every 2-3 hours if you can. • Keep a good posture, sit and stand upright, and avoid slouching for long periods of time. • Gradually increase your normal activities. • Take regular pain relief. This can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Follow the instructions on the packet.	• Don't rest for too long as keeping active and mobile has been shown to be more effective. • Do not lift heavy objects until your pain improves. • Do not twist or strain your back suddenly. • Use ice packs: • Over areas of skin that are in poor condition • If you have poor sensation to cold • If you know you have poor circulation.

After any back problem, it's important to get movement and strength back. This supports tissue healing and will help you get moving again. You may not be able to return to your usual level of activity immediately and improvements may be slow to start with. However, a gradual return to normal activities is the best way to get good short and long-term results after a back problem.

If you get any of the problems (Red flags) as listed below, attend the Emergency Department at the Grange University Hospital immediately. Do not attend a Minor Injury Unit as they won't be able to help you.

- Weakness of your legs
- Lack of feeling (numbness) in your legs
- Lack of feeling (numbness) around your back passage/bottom
- Incontinence of urine (passing urine without your knowledge)
- Urinary retention (unable to pass urine)
- Incontinence of faeces/poo (passing faeces/poo without your knowledge)
- Loss of bladder sensation (not feeling your bladder is getting so full that you need to pass urine and then dribbling urine)
- Problem with erection (sexual activity)
- Unwell (fever, vomiting, chills, sweating)

What do I take for pain?

No pain relief may be needed if the pain is mild. However, painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then.

They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol.

If Paracetamol doesn't help at all despite taking the recommended dose, then try changing to Ibuprofen 400 mg three times a day. You can also take both drugs – speak to a pharmacist about the best way to do this. If you have been advised not to take Ibuprofen in the past or are on any blood thinning tablets, then avoid Ibuprofen.

With all medication, it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers

(like Ibuprofen) relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you shouldn't use them.

Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either.

You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with gel, however, the amount of drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.

If you are struggling to control your pain or concerned with your progress, please attend the Emergency Department at the Grange University Hospital or contact your GP. Do not attend a Minor Injury Unit.

If you have been advised to contact Physiotherapy:

Physio self-referral link: https://movebettergwent.nhs.wales/body_parts/low-back-pain/

If you are unable to do this electronically you should call 0300 3732539 between 8.30am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday.



References:

[Back pain - NHS](#)

**If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant
Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287**

Or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056

Nevil Hall Hospital: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

**"This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**