



YOUR GUIDE TO ACUTE LOWER BACK PAIN

MUSCULOSKELETAL

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Introduction

Please take note of the following before starting any of the exercises in this guide:

- The information contained in this guide is intended to assist in managing your recovery.
- This guide is based on the latest medical research in the field and contains the best advice available to the best of our knowledge.
- This guide is complementary to other medical services and is not intended as a substitute for a health care provider's consultation.
- Never disregard medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something that you have read in this guide.

● Many people have found quick and lasting relief from their pain by acting upon the information provided, but everyone decides for themselves what to do with this information. Should you doubt a particular exercise in your situation, please consult your health professional.

When consulting your health professional, it is wise to take this guide with you to show them.

What causes acute lower back pain?

Acute lower back pain is very common and one of the main reasons for sickness absence in the UK. Acute lower back pain can be loosely defined as pain that is present for 4 weeks or less and although often very painful, it is normally not serious. In most cases the pain lasts from a few days to a few weeks and usually clears up after about six weeks. The complex structure of the lower back means that quite small amounts of damage to any of the structures of the back can cause a lot of pain and discomfort. Pain in the lower back is usually a symptom of stress or damage to the ligaments, muscles, tendons, joints or discs, and in some cases the pain may refer to the buttocks and thighs. Injury to any of these structures is classified as mechanical lower back pain, and can be caused by excessive stress from lower

back repetitive lifting, minimal movement such as bending forwards, trauma, or there may not be an obvious cause at all.

Acute lower back pain can also be a result of less common but more serious secondary causes that include metabolic diseases, inflammatory rheumatologic disorders, and referred pain from other sources. An early and accurate diagnosis is very important to identify the cause of pain and rule out any secondary pathology. Therefore an early visit to a GP or allied health professional is essential to ensure a full history is taken, a physical assessment is performed and an accurate diagnosis and treatment plan is provided to the patient.

What treatment can I receive?

Early intervention with acute lower back pain is essential as it has been shown in many studies, that the longer an individual remains inactive and off work due to acute lower back pain, the harder it is for them to return and the less likely it is that they will recover.

The following are recommendations regarding the treatment and recovery from an episode of acute lower back pain:

- It is repeatedly reported that **bed rest does not promote recovery** from acute mechanical low back pain, with or without sciatica.
- Sitting for long periods of time is not recommended as even in a reclined position it actually raises the intradiscal pressures and can theoretically worsen disc herniation and pain.

- It is important that you continue with **normal activities** wherever possible, including return to work if possible.
- **Pain killers** (e.g. paracetamol) and anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen) have been shown to help with the symptoms, but it is important to consult your GP before taking them.
- A muscle relaxant may be prescribed but only for a few days and once again consult your GP before taking them.

● If you are in severe pain, keep bed rest as short as possible, preferably no longer than 2-3 days, as complete rest does not help recovery.

● **Exercises** are recommended to strengthen the muscles and improve posture. This will help your return to work and activities of daily living, and help to prevent future episodes of lower back pain.

What about exercise?

Acute lower back pain can be reduced with exercises that strengthen the muscles in your back, stomach, hips and thighs. There are also specific muscles known as your core/postural muscles that are essential in stabilising your spine and pelvis. Strengthening these muscles and being aware of your posture throughout your day will serve to decrease your pain and help to prevent further episodes of acute lower back pain. **Keeping in good physical condition** by being active in recreational activities, like running, walking, bike riding, and swimming will also help to maintain muscle strength and prevent future episodes of pain.

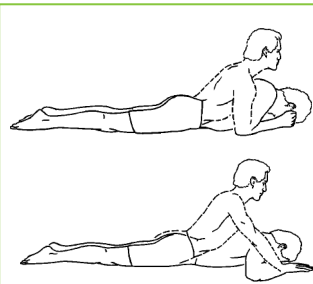
Before beginning any exercise programme, it is very important that you discuss the programme with your doctor or allied health professional and follow their advice. It is important that you **exercise regularly** and before exercising you should do a simple warm up with slow, rhythmic exercises, to ensure that you are not stretching/exercising cold muscles as this may result in further injury. It is very important that you concentrate on your breathing with all the exercises, remembering to inhale when preparing for the exercise and to exhale on effort. During exercises where you hold the contraction you should continue to breathe normally throughout.

Exercises >>>>

Exercises

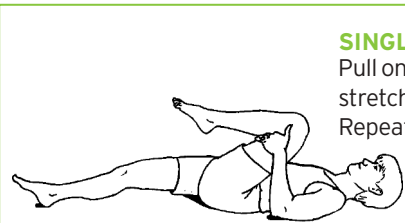
STRETCHING EXERCISES

- Repeat each of these stretches 3 times and hold for at least 30 seconds.
- Hold a steady stretch and do not bounce.
- These can be performed even if you are experiencing pain, but it is essential that you limit the stretch to pain i.e. reduce your range of movement according to your pain.
- Make sure that you continue with normal breathing while holding the stretch.



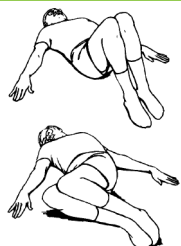
MCKENZIE STRETCH

Gently come up onto your elbows, keeping your hips on the ground. Hold the position for 10 counts. Push up further, putting the pressure on your lower arm, but always ensure that your hips are on the ground and only feel a stretch, not pain. Only progress the range as your pain allows.



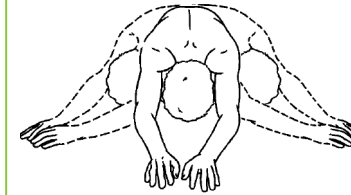
SINGLE KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH

Pull one knee in to chest until a comfortable stretch is felt in the lower back and buttocks. Repeat with the opposite knee.



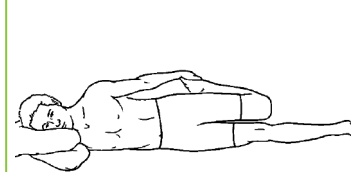
LOWER TRUNK ROTATION STRETCH

Lie on your back, knees bent, feet together and arms out to the sides. Rotate knees to one side and hold the stretch. Do not go too far, keep your arms on the ground. Limit the rotation to pain.



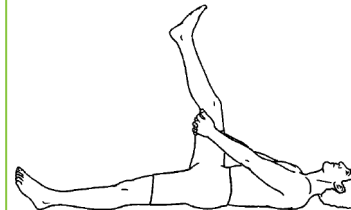
MID BACK STRETCH

In a kneeling position, sitting back on your heels, push your chest towards the floor, reaching forward as far as you can with your arms. Now stretch to each side by slowly rotating your body and keeping your chest as low to the floor as possible.



QUADRICEPS STRETCH

Lying on your side with your lower knee bent for stability, pull your upper heel in towards your buttocks until a comfortable stretch is felt in the front of your thigh. Hold onto your ankle and not your foot. A towel can be used if you are unable to reach your leg.



ACTIVE HAMSTRING STRETCH

Support the back of your thigh behind your knee. Starting with your knee bent, attempt to straighten your knee until a comfortable stretch is felt in the back of your thigh. Ensure that your buttocks do not lift up off the ground. A towel can be used if you are unable to reach your leg with your hands.



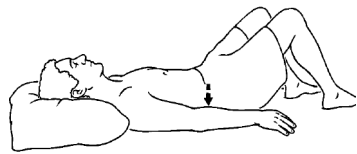
BUTTOCKS

Lying on your back, rest your right ankle on your left knee. Using your hands lift your left leg into the air, bending your knee at 90°. Pull your left leg gently towards your body. You should feel a stretch in the upper part of your right leg i.e. buttocks.

Exercises continued

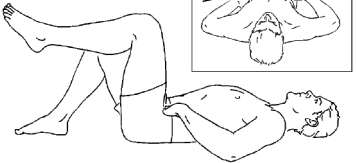
STABILITY EXERCISES

- Ensure that these exercises are done slowly and controlled.
- Hold each repetition for 5-10 seconds and repeat 5-10 times.
- These exercises can be done regularly i.e. if possible a few times a day.



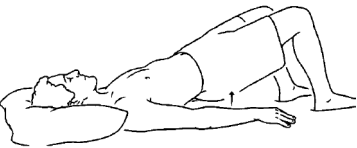
FINDING NEUTRAL

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Put your hands on your hip bones and flatten your back into the ground. You will feel your hip bones are pointing towards you. Now arch your back up keeping your buttocks on the ground. You will feel your hip bones are pointing towards your knees. Find the middle position between the two extremes, your hip bones should be pointing towards the ceiling. This is neutral.



CORE STRENGTHENING AND SINGLE LEG LIFT

Find the above position. Pull your belly button towards your spine, without changing the position of your pelvis. Make sure that you can still breathe. You should only feel a slight contraction in your lower abdominals. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Now raise one leg slowly up and down without moving your pelvis. Repeat on the opposite leg.

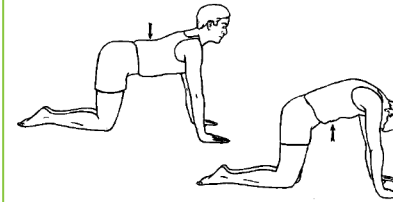


PELVIC LIFTS ON FLOOR

Lying on your back, bend both knees to 90° with your feet flat on the floor. Tighten Transverse Abdominis (TA) (stomach) muscles and lift your pelvis and lower back off the floor. Hold this position for 10 seconds and then lower down slowly returning to the start position, maintaining your TA contraction throughout the movement. Repeat 10 times.

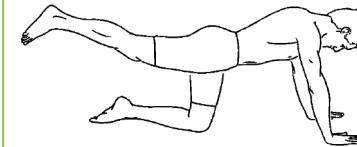
MOBILITY EXERCISES

- Perform 3 sets of 10 and hold each position for 5 seconds.



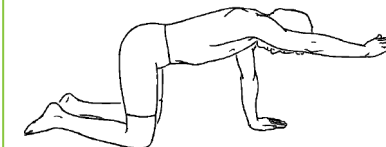
CAT CURLS

On all fours ensure that your hands are under your shoulders, knees under hips and back flat i.e. table top position. Start by arching your lower back i.e. push your belly towards the floor. Slowly progress up your back ending with your head up. Now tuck chin in and push up through shoulder blades, arching your back upwards. End in your lower spine. Do not hold either position. Repeat 10 times.



HIP EXTENSION ON ALL-FOURS

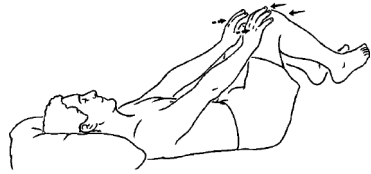
On all fours ensure that your hands are under your shoulders, knees are under your hips, and your back is flat i.e. table top. Raise one leg behind with your knee slightly flexed. Do not arch your neck or back.



UPPER BODY EXTENSION ON ALL-FOURS

Start in an all four position. Raise one arm out in front of you. Do not arch your back and be sure to keep your back flat.

Exercises continued



BILATERAL ISOMETRIC HIP FLEXION

Raise both of your knees to outstretched arms. Gently push your knees away, but resist the movement with your knees. Keep your arms straight. You should feel your stomach working but should not feel excessive pain in your lower back.

Contact us

This guide is designed to assist you in the self-management of your injury/condition.

We are here to assist your recovery in the shortest but safest possible time. If you have any uncertainties or queries regarding the information, please do not hesitate to contact us on:

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