

Dear Patient

# Low Back Pain

## General Information

Low Back Pain affects nearly two thirds of the population at some stage in their lives. There are many causes of back pain including damage or strain of the joints and their associated ligaments and joint capsules.

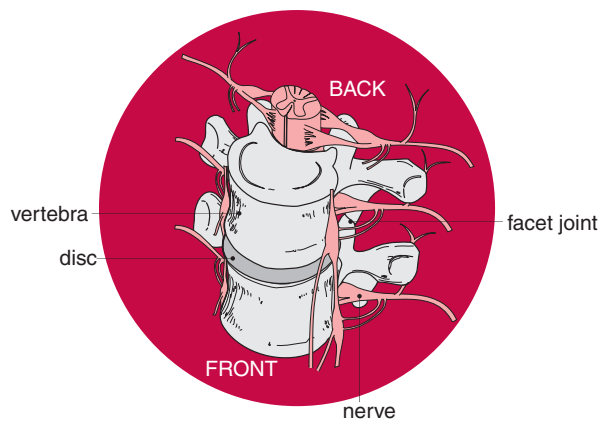
Other causes of back pain are disc problems, muscle strains, poor posture, arthritis, stress fractures and nerve irritation (e.g sciatica). This handout will highlight the most common injuries which can occur to the back .

### FACTS

- Low back pain is not usually due to any serious health problem.
- Low back pain recurs within a couple of years in more than half the people who experience it.
- The pain can be very strong and may require you to reduce your activities for some time, but resting for more than a few days does not usually help and may make things worse.
- Generally, best results come from staying active within the limits of pain.
- Level of pain and degree of damage are not always linked.

### CAUSES OF LOW BACK PAIN

- Most back pain does not mean damage to the spine.
- Few people with back pain have disc bulges, fractures or nerve compression.
- Most X-Ray findings are normal changes which occur with age. Muscles, ligaments and joints in your back are the major causes of pain.



Above: Illustration of 2 lumbar vertebrae with disc in between.

### TREATMENTS

There are many treatments available which can help to control the pain and allow you to stay active.

#### Pain killers-

- Paracetamol or Aspirin are the safest painkillers. Anti-inflammatory tablets also provide pain relief, but check with your Doctor or Pharmacist before taking any tablets.

#### Heat-

- Hot packs or warm water will often relieve some of the pain and muscle tightness.

#### Spinal manipulation -

- Physiotherapists mobilise spinal joints using their hands, improving mobility and reducing pain. In some cases, Manipulation may also be used. Please ensure that these techniques are performed by trained practitioners.

#### Relaxation -

- If stress is a problem, learning to reduce the tension is useful through breathing exercises, muscle relaxation and mental calming.

*"Physiotherapists use their hands to mobilise spinal joints, improving mobility and reducing pain."*

### HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOVER ?

- It is difficult to estimate recovery time from back pain. If the pain is due to a minor joint strain, a good response to treatment can be expected anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Staying active during painful times has been shown to improve recovery.

### REST OR EXERCISE ?

Your body must stay active to stay healthy. Exercise gives you:

- Stronger bones
- Fit active muscles.
- More energy
- Release of chemicals which reduce pain.
- When your back is sore, you can exercise initially in a heated Hydrotherapy pool under the guidance of your physiotherapist. As things improve, your practitioner may recommend an individualised Pilates programme designed specifically for your pathology.

*Disclaimer : The material contained in these pages is intended as a guide only and does not constitute advice or treatment. For further information, please see your qualified health professional.*



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