

# Backache

## What causes backache?

Backache usually is caused by minor strains in the muscles or ligaments, but more serious lower back pain usually is the result of an injury to one of the many joints in the base of your spine. The joints include the *facet joints* and *discs*, which when disturbed push against painful tissue or nerve roots just behind them. The injury usually happens while bending your spine forwards (flexing it), especially while lifting something heavy.

Never bend forward with your legs straight to perform any task. Once you have experienced back trouble, it has a tendency to recur, and so be careful to protect your back.

## How can you care for it?

Adjust your activity to your back discomfort. Take care with posture, making beds and so on. Avoid fatigue. Ideally you should perform a set of exercises to strengthen the muscles of your spine and abdomen.

## Sport and exercise

Be careful of sudden twisting movements and sudden overloading of muscles, as in cricket, golf, squash, sailing, weightlifting and horse riding. Walking, jogging (avoid hard surfaces) and swimming are good activities if you can manage them.

## Sitting

Avoid sitting for long periods, especially in the car. Your knees should be higher than your hips and your back straight. Maintain the hollow in your back.

## Bed rest and sleep

Use a low pillow and lie on your side. Do not lie face-up or face-down. Use a firm mattress.

## Lifting

Avoid lifting anything heavier than 10 kg (20 lb). Squat close to the load and keep your back straight. Do not stoop over the load to get a grip and pick it up. Lift using your knees and legs (not your back) as leverage. Keep your back straight, not bent forwards or backwards.

## Your weight

Being overweight adds an extra burden to your back, so it is important to keep as close to your ideal weight as possible. Exercise helps to avoid this problem.

## Acute episodes of pain

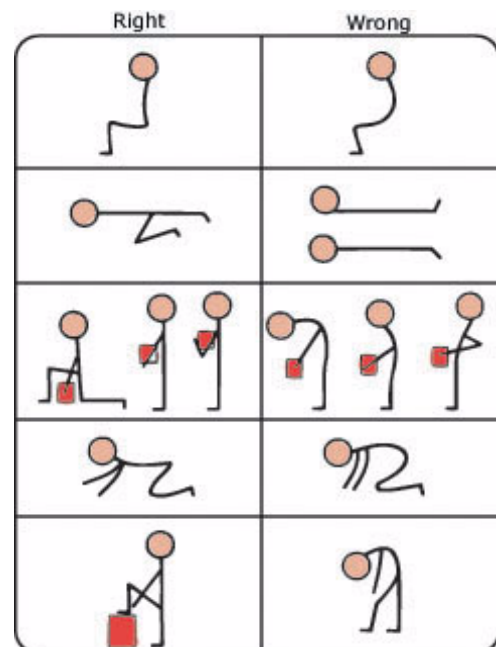
It is best to keep active and keep up your normal mobility (if possible) when your back hurts. If the spasms are severe, you will need to lie down on a firm surface.

## Scrubbing floors and gardening

Your hands should be as far forward of you as necessary to keep your back straight. Do not flex your back by having your hands working too close to your knees.

## Bending

Take care when bending, for example tying shoelaces or putting on stockings. Put your foot on a stool, chair or box that is near enough to your body and high enough so that you do not have to bend down to your foot.



Rules of care for sitting, lying, lifting and bending