

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and dark jeans, is shown in profile from the waist up. She has her right hand on her lower back, suggesting back pain. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a white wall and a blue chair. The entire image has a light blue overlay.

# Free Special Injury Report

“8 quick, easy ways to  
live a healthy, active,  
positive life, free from  
back pain”

## 8 quick, easy ways to live a healthy, active, positive life, free from back pain

### Introduction

If you've asked for this information because you're suffering with back pain, you've taken the right first step.

At goPhysio, we understand only too well, that as you age, physically things can start to go wrong. Injuries and ailments can take longer to recover and it's time to face up to the fact that we start to lose our mobility, fitness, independence and enjoyment of life.

Being told by your GP to accept your 'aches and pains' as an 'age thing' and being told to 'take pills and rest for 6 weeks' becomes SO frustrating.

At goPhysio, we understand that this out-dated and unhelpful advice from your GP, confuses your ability to make a good decision about what to do about your back pain.

Following the advice of 'rest and painkillers' will inevitably result in a significant deterioration in your mobility, activity and fitness levels, where you'll be unable to take part in the activities and hobbies you enjoy (if it hasn't already).

Well the good news is, things have moved on significantly from the old-fashioned 'wait & see' approach. At goPhysio, our scientific understanding of back pain and how to help people return to living an active and mobile, independent life, free of pain and injury, works. We've helped thousands of people over the last 20 years.

### At goPhysio, we call this our "Better Back Way"

### 8 Steps

We've developed a quick and easy **Eight Step Guide**, full of useful tips and advice that you can do straightaway, to help ease your back pain and stiffness.

It's packed full of information, to help you.....

- Ease your back pain in the early stages of injury or relapse.
- Develop a plan aimed at getting rid of your back pain forever.
- Return fully to the active, healthy, lifestyle and activities you enjoy!

Whether that's.....

- .....getting out for a lovely walk in the sunshine with your partner or friends
- .....looking after your children or grandchildren and taking them to the park to play
- .....going to your regular exercise, yoga or Pilates class

How great it would be if you try just one of these 'tips' every day and within a few weeks you could have all of these incredibly powerful strategies for easing back pain in play and working for you – giving you back the active and healthy lifestyle that you've lost, or are in danger of losing.

Whatever your aspirations, here's our challenge to you.....now that you have this knowledge in your hands, take time every day to try out at least one of these tips. It really won't take long and won't cost you anything but a few minutes of your time. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised by how much better and healthier you will feel for doing so.

## Step One - Avoid Making It Worse

Yes, you heard it here first! The most important practical thing you can do to help solve your back pain, especially in the early, painful stage is to .....**avoid making it worse!**

It sounds simple, but many people don't know what to do when pain strikes and unnecessarily make things worse!



### *So how do you avoid making it worse?*

During the early, painful stages of an episode of back pain, you need to temporarily avoid the movements, positions or activities that significantly aggravate your symptoms. **Significantly aggravate** is the important part here, some 'mild' pain or aching is OK. You don't need to be afraid of the pain you're getting. Just avoid the moderate to severe end of the pain scale.

Often, the aggravating positions or activities are what we back pain experts refer to as 'loaded flexion' - bending, reaching or twisting movements of the back whilst lifting a load away from the body.

A lot of routine day-to-day activities involve loaded flexion, such as:

- Lifting a heavy awkward case out of the boot of your car
- Bending over, leaning and reaching forwards when making your bed
- Lifting a wriggly child from a low cot with high sides

Normally, these activities are fine. However, these activities should be avoided in the early, acutely painful stages of back pain, as preventing making your back pain worse is a crucial first step to recovery that is often overlooked. Avoiding making your pain worse will help harness your body's natural healing powers and aid recovery from your back pain.

### **Myth Buster**

**Myth:** Pain means serious damage and injury

**Reality Check:** Temporary discomfort is normal and often part of the recovery process. You don't need to be afraid of pain. Back pain rarely means serious damage.

## Step Two - Start Recovery Early

Once you're happy with **Step One** and doing your best to avoid making things worse, it's important to move onto **Step Two**. Start doing things that help make it better! This involves performing movements and activities and finding positions that help ease your pain.

*What sort of things could you try?*

To reduce your pain, it helps to spend time in positions or doing the activities that are comfortable and significantly ease your pain.

This requires good body awareness, but it's often a case of just doing the opposite of what aggravates your pain.

For example:

- If sitting aggravates your back pain there is a good chance that lying down, standing, walking or a combination of these, will ease it.
- If standing makes your symptoms worse, such as standing for long periods in a queue or watching your children/grandchildren play sports, trying the opposite should ease it, such as.....
  - Bending and stretching forward, trying to touch your toes.
  - Walking every 5-10 minutes rather than standing still.

It's about keeping mobile and moving between these comfortable, pain relieving positions, regularly throughout the day, especially in the early stages of back pain.

Variety is key - try and find a range of positions or activities that ease your pain rather than just one. The more you can move about, alternate between comfortable positions, varying what you do, the better. This is exactly what we do in the treatment rooms, with people suffering from back pain - teaching them independence, fast tracking them to recovery!



### Myth Buster

**Myth:** I should avoid moving about too much if I'm in pain

**Reality Check:** Movement is therapy! It's really important to make sure you keep moving. This will help rather than hinder the recovery process.

## Step Three - Use Heat To Ease Your Pain

If you've got back pain, you'll look for something to use to ease your pain. Heat is definitely better than ice for relieving most back pain.

When deciding whether to use ice or heat, it's important to understand which parts of your body might be causing your pain. In the vast majority of cases of back pain, there will be an element of both muscle spasm and stiffness in your spinal joints.

Heat is great for easing both of these problems as it:

- Increases the blood flow to the muscles
- Improves the flexibility of the muscles and soft tissues
- Helps reduce painful muscle spasm

The winning combination for you to ease your stiff, achy, painful back is to use some heat for around 10-15 minutes over the painful area (a wheat pack or hot water bottle with a cover is great!) and then do some gentle mobility exercises to get your back moving. These are much easier, more comfortable and more effective after using some heat.



### Myth Buster

**Myth:** Ice is best for easing back pain

**Reality Check:** Heat is best for easing back pain, particularly for improving painful muscle spasm and joint stiffness.

## Step Four - Don't Rest

There was once a time when people who had back pain were told to lay down, keep still and rest. This is definitely no longer the case and in fact the exact opposite is true!

Rest will only slow down your recovery and cause more problems than it solves.

In the early, painful period of having back pain, following **Step One** and avoiding any aggravating activities is recommended. We use the term 'selective-rest', so, to selectively rest (or avoid) only the significantly aggravating (pain causing) activities.



**We're designed to move and movement in itself is therapy!**

To speed up your recovery, it's important to move regularly and at the appropriate level. Moving 'little and often', as pain allows will lead to a faster and more sustained recovery and return to work, life and the daily activities and hobbies you enjoy.

It's OK to exercise, just follow the principles of **Step One** and **Step Two**, of avoiding aggravating activities and doing more of the easing activities. If your normal exercise or activity makes your pain worse, try some simple back mobility exercises instead.

Doing exercises will help ease your pain and muscle spasm, improve spinal joint mobility and muscle flexibility and help get you back on the road to full recovery and independence.

### Myth Buster

**Myth:** Back problems must be rested

**Reality Check:** Quite the opposite! Activity and movement leads to faster recovery and return to activities. Temporarily reducing or modifying your activity may be required, but prolonged rest is detrimental

## Step Five - It's OK To Take Painkillers (Short Term)

Although we want to avoid taking painkillers longer term, in the short term, can be very helpful.

Many people with back pain have the flawed thinking that:

- Taking painkillers will just mask the pain and so I'll do something to make it worse
- I'll over do it if I take painkillers
- I need to feel my pain so I don't do anything I shouldn't

This isn't the case. Taking painkillers will help reduce your back pain. This in turn will help make it more comfortable for you to move, which will speed up your recovery. The sooner you can recover, returning to the hobbies and activities you enjoy the better!

However, there's an important point to make here. Painkillers can definitely help with reducing back pain and improving mobility in the early days, which is great. But, the aim is to take painkillers for the shortest time possible, as, you can very easily and quickly become unnecessarily reliant on medication.

The best way to avoid having a future reliant on pain killers, is to get the right advice and support and be proactive about your back pain from the start.

*Please do seek professional guidance from your Pharmacist or GP about the best painkillers to take for your back pain.*



### Myth Buster

**Myth:** Not taking painkillers is better than taking painkillers

**Reality Check:** Taking painkillers for back pain in the short term improves pain and mobility and speeds up recovery.

## Step Six - Find A Comfortable Sleeping Position

Getting a good nights sleep, usually around than 6-8 hours a night, is really important for helping to aid your recovery from pain and injury.

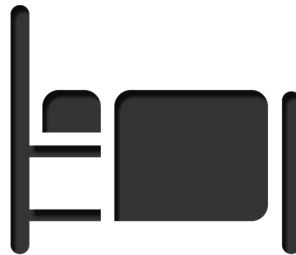
Unfortunately, when you're suffering with back pain, getting a good nights sleep isn't always easy.

As back pain experts, this is one of our priorities when we see people with back pain in the clinic. We do this by practically demonstrating and teaching the best sleeping position for the individual, giving them different strategies to help ease their pain and get back to sleep when they wake in the small hours of the morning.

Here's a few ideas of positions you may like to try that often help people:

- Lying on your side, with 1 or both knees and hips bent, with a pillow between your knees
- Lying on your back with both knees and hips bent up, with pillows to support your legs
- Lying on your front, maybe try putting a small pillow under your hips so you aren't lying totally flat

Try a few positions, see what works for you and don't forget to alternate between the helpful 'pain easing' ones.



### Myth Buster

**Myth:** I should lie flat on my back in bed if I have back pain

**Reality Check:** Moving about in bed is fine. You want to find the most comfortable sleeping position you can, so that you can actually get some sleep. Sleeping will help your recovery.



## Step Seven - Gain Some Understanding

It may be that this is the first time you've had back pain and hopefully it will go away as quickly as it appeared and you'll never have it again.



Unfortunately, for many people this isn't the case. They get stuck in a repeated, roller-coaster cycle of back pain, involving repeated visits to the GP, rest and painkillers. It gets a bit better for a while, until it reoccurs a few months later.

Over time, sufferers of long term, persistent back pain, give up on getting back to the sports and hobbies they enjoy. They lose fitness, become less mobile and lose independence, all the while the injury keeps repeating again and again. *Sound familiar? Where are you on that spiral?*

So, to put an end to this frustrating cycle of pain and disability and to have a chance of permanently resolving your back pain, a crucial step is to identify and understand what unique factors are causing YOU to suffer with this back pain?

It's rarely one, simple cause. Rather it's a combination of a wide variety of factors, as everyone has their own unique 'life story' that has contributed to their overall picture.

Often, the injured, painful structures are just the 'victims' of the underlying problem; the tip-of-the-iceberg. The activity that tips you over the edge into an acute episode of pain is usually just one of the many contributing factors.

Some common factors or triggers which may cause repeated episodes of back pain:

- Having a sedentary, inactive lifestyle.
- Low activity and exercise levels and body de-conditioning.
- A high Body Mass Index (BMI) and being overweight.
- Previous episodes of back pain.
- Being overly flexible. Women tend to be a lot more mobile and flexible than men. This additional flexibility can increase the risk of certain back pain issues.
- Poor foot biomechanics and alignment.
- Having a job or doing a hobby where you stay in 1 position for long periods of time or do a repeated movement for a long time, without much variety.

Once you have gained a greater understanding of what might be causing your back pain, it's about addressing the cause or triggers to prevent the yo-yoing cycle of pain and frustration.

### Myth Buster

**Myth:** My recurrent back pain will eventually get better by itself.

**Reality Check:** Unfortunately, time alone isn't the best healer. You have to be pro-active, positive and help yourself. Seeking appropriate, expert advice, support and guidance will give you the best possible chance of a future free of pain.

## Step Eight - Get Physical With Physiotherapy

It's reassuring to know, that many episodes of back pain will improve with the right approach. Follow the steps above and you'll be heading in the right direction. By following the steps, you should find that your pain will start to ease and you'll be more active and mobile and be able to start doing the things you enjoy again!

However, nothing beats having individual support and guidance when you have an injury. An expert to help you solve YOUR problems that is focused and offers specific help for YOU.

This is particularly important if you are suffering with recurrent back pain. By seeing a Physiotherapist, you will get:

- A clear understanding of what's actually going on with your back
- A comprehensive plan to address all the issues that will help stop your recurrent back pain
- 'Hands on' treatment to help relieve your pain, spasm and stiffness, so you can move more easily and start living life without your pain
- A pro-active exercise plan to help stop your back pain coming back again and again
- Reassurance from someone who's seen thousands of people with back pain, just like you, and have found a better way to be free of back pain
- The confidence to start moving and being active

### Myth Buster

**Myth:** I should avoid exercise, especially weight training

**Reality Check:** Exercise is generally accepted amongst all respected authorities to be the best modality for treating low back pain, in both the acute and chronic phases. Studies have shown great benefits and long-term safety of various types of exercises, including high load resistance training.



## Back pain bonus - Common Questions

### Question 1 “I have back pain, when should I see my G.P.?”

In the majority of cases, there is no need to go and see your G.P. if you have back pain.

However, it's important that you are aware of what symptoms you shouldn't ignore and when to go and seek help from your doctor.

You should seek help from your doctor if you are suffering with any of the following symptoms:

- A history of a significant direct blow or trauma to the spine area
- Pins and needles, tingling, altered sensation or significant weakness in both arms or legs.
- Loss of bladder or bowel control or significantly increased frequency.
- Severe and unrelenting night pain.
- Back pain associated with being significantly unwell (fever, sickness, feeling ill etc.)
- Back pain associated with significant, unexplained weight loss.

These are all symptoms which may indicate a more significant problem that may require further investigation.

### Question 2 “Don't I need to have a scan or an X-Ray”

There is a large and growing body of research that shows that not only do results of scans correlate poorly with symptoms in people with low back pain, but also that most people without low back pain have changes on scans and x-rays that do not cause any symptoms at all.

For these reasons and more, imaging alone isn't capable of telling us exactly why someone is experiencing pain.

In essence, as back pain experts, we don't treat a picture. We treat a person, looking at the whole clinical picture, of which an x-ray or scan is only one part of. So in practice, scans are seen as the exception rather than the rule.

Of course this does not mean that all MRI scans are irrelevant in all cases, but it does mean that they are not always necessary or helpful. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that in some cases, having a scan can make situations worse.

#### Myth Buster

**Myth:** There must be a quick and easy way to stop back pain forever

**Reality Check:** Unfortunately not. If you want your body to look after you, you need to look after it too. Being pain free can take hard work, self-control, and some discipline. It's an investment (with good returns!)

## What next?

So, there you have it, 8 simple steps that you can take TODAY to ease your back pain and start working towards improving your quality of life and health, getting back to doing what you love.

So many people just put up with or ignore their pain, accepting the fact that pain is a part of life, yet hoping it will go away after a few weeks or months. If your back pain has lasted more than a week without improving, I recommend you take these eight steps and proactively do something about it.

Take time every day to try out at least one of these 'tips' and within a few weeks you could have all of these incredibly powerful strategies for easing back pain in play and working for you – giving you back the active and healthy lifestyle that you've lost, or are in danger of losing.

There's obviously so much you can do to help yourself and I could go much more in-depth on ways to end back pain than the principles I've shared with you here, but these fundamentals, if you follow them, will make a huge difference to the quality of your life.

In the weeks ahead, I'll be sending you even more tips and advice on how to restore your active and healthy lifestyle and will share with you how physiotherapy can make a big difference to your life.

In meantime, If you'd like further support and expert guidance, tailored to your individual back pain problems or concerns, please get in touch.

**Paul Baker MCSP**  
**Founder & Clinical Director of goPhysio**

**Maintain an  
injury free  
and active  
lifestyle**