

Acute Back Injury Advice (for lumbar strains & sprains)

For the first 2-3 days after injury follow PRICE Treatment*:

P-rotect: The area from any stress or activity (lifting, sports, bending, twisting, quick movements, unnecessary weight bearing) which may cause further injury or affect the healing process. Move carefully keeping your abdominals engaged to support your back, and bend with the hips/knees (not lower back).

R-est: In the initial, acute stage of injury you should rest the back to optimise healing and to keep your energy reserves for this process. Lying on a firm mattress or the floor with a duvet on it works well. A pillow under your knees or a rolled up towel under your lower back may make you more comfortable. If sitting ensure you don't slouch and keep a natural forward curve in your lower back (a cushion or rolled up towel helps support your lumbar curve).



Neutral Spine 'resting' Position:

Take regular 20 minute rests throughout the day to allow your back to heal/calm! Use the neutral position (left) and lie on a duvet, Pilates/camping mat, or sun lounger cushion.

I-ce: Ice the area for 20 minutes 4-5 times a day. Use crushed ice, an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel (or a GENTLE ice massage).

C-ompression: Not indicated unless pronounced swelling is present (in which case a 1-2kg bag of sand/rice can be used to compress the area).

- For the first few days you can use anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen, Diclofenac or Naproxen to reduce (over)inflammation of the injury (Devils Claw is a good herbal alternative). Check with your doctor or pharmacist whether you can take these (with food) safely; 'gels' are safer, without digestive side effects! I don't recommend taking anti-inflammatory long term as serious side effects can occur, and they may impede injury healing!
- You can take Paracetamol or Co-codamol doses between anti-inflammatory doses, if the pain is severe. Your doctor may also prescribe Diasepam (a muscle relaxant) if you have severe muscle spasms, or can't sleep. Alternatively, Cramp Bark is a great herbal muscle relaxant!
- Massage, manipulation and heat (no hot baths or heat packs!) are contra-indicated for the first 2-3 days after injury as they will interfere with tissue healing and increase inflammation (and pain).

After the first 2-3 days switch to MICE* treatment:

M-ovement: After resting for 48 hours it is very important to get the injured area moving (gently/carefully). This helps with tissue healing, helps restore range of movement and ensures functional scar tissue formation. The area should be actively moved/stretched progressively (go a bit further) each day.

- **I-ce:** Reduce icing the area to 2 x 20 mins/day. 5-10 days after injury you can switch to contrast bathing (see help sheet) to speed tissue healing (only if the pain/inflammation/heat has calmed).
 - **C-ompression & Elevation** = Not applicable to back!

Initial MICE Exercises for Acute Back Injury (2-10 days after injury):



Knee Rocking:

1. Lie on your back on a mat. Carefully pull your knees to your chest, allowing your ankles to cross for comfort, till your buttocks start to lift off the floor.
2. Gently rock your knees to your chest & back, finding a 'natural, rebounding' rhythm. Continue for 10-20 seconds, 3 x day.



Lower Back Stretch:

1. Lie on your back, arms apart. Hold the outside of your thigh (knee & hip bent).
2. Slowly pull your leg across your body to stretch. Keep your hip on the ground to target glutes, let it rise to target lower back/lumbar (shown). Repeat 3 x day



Cat Stretch:

1. Get on your hands and knees (hands under shoulders & knees under hips).
2. Take a breath in; as you breathe out slowly push your mid-lower back up to the ceiling (tilting head to groin). Breathe normally and hold stretch for 10 seconds.
3. Take another breath in, as you breathe out push your abdomen/chest to the ground (curving spine to ground), raising your head to look forward. Breathe normally and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times per day.



Knee rolling:

1. Lie on your back, knees bent and feet flat on floor (as shown).
2. Pull in your abdomen (engage core) and let your knees roll (controlled) to the side until you feel your back move/work adequately.
3. Slowly roll the other way. Repeat 10-20 x (3 x day). As you improve, let your knees go all the way to the floor!