



Sara Gordon & Associates

## Physiotherapy Newsletter

### Acute Low Back Pain

This is one of the most common things I see and can be very nasty for the patient – I know because I get it too from time to time!

#### What Causes Low Back Pain?

It is usually caused by a minor movement such as bending over often with a twisting movement. You may feel the pain immediately or it may develop over a few hours (eg over night) as inflammation develops.

The pain is usually in the lumbar area of the spine but can radiate into the buttocks. It is usually a dull ache or pain.

**If there is numbness, pins and needles in the leg, or weakness, a nerve is involved (usually the sciatic nerve) and you should see a doctor soon to get painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs.**

The cause of the pain may be a strained facet joint, injury to the muscles or ligaments or more rarely the disc.

## What should I do if I get acute low back pain?

- Get into a position of least pain. Suitable positions may be lying on the back with a pillow under your knees, or on the side with a pillow between your knees
- Avoid movements or positions that make the pain worse.
- Apply ice to reduce the inflammation (if you can bear it) or heat to relax the muscles
- Bed rest may help but not for more than two days as resting for too long can make back injuries worse.
- Take painkillers
- See a physiotherapist if it isn't settling within 48 hours

## What can a physiotherapist do?

- Diagnose the problem
- Electrotherapy and/or acupuncture to ease the pain
- Mobilisations or manipulation to restore movement
- Massage to ease the pain
- Advice on self care
- The prescription of exercises to help prevent further incidents.