

# Upper Back Pain

## Information for Patients



**This leaflet has been written to give you the right information about upper back pain and what you can do to help with your recovery.**

### What is upper back pain?

Upper back pain relates to any discomfort that you might feel in the region between your neck and your lower back. In a lot of cases, the discomfort will be near or around the shoulder blade area.

The upper back region is also called the thoracic spine.

### Why does my upper back hurt?

Upper back pain is the least common form of spinal pain but it still affects a number of people. The most likely causes include muscle and joint issues.

Saying exactly what is causing or contributing to your pain is often very difficult, however most issues are nothing sinister and will get better by themselves with time and some gentle exercises.

### What are the common symptoms?

**Pain:** Upper back issues tend to cause pain and discomfort that stays within the upper back region, however sometimes may travel to the front of your chest or rib area. Discomfort can be with movement or with rest and sometimes, even with activities like coughing or sneezing.

**Stiffness:** Your upper back may feel stiff or tight. This is likely to be linked to increased muscular work around the back as it deals with the process of recovery.

**Noises:** Clicks, pops, clunks and grinds are very normal in all joints, including your upper back, and in most cases are nothing to worry about.

### What can I do to help myself?

**Calm it down:** Often the best place to start with any painful complaint is to try and calm it down. In a lot of cases there will be things your back likes to do and some things that it is

less happy to do after your injury. Calming it down simply means looking at the things it doesn't like and trying to make some adjustments or changes to make it easier for yourself.

For example, your upper back might be uncomfortable when you are standing for a long time or doing the washing up. Whilst it is an issue, it might be useful to look at what things you can do sitting down or perhaps taking a few more breaks whilst washing up.

**Be kind to yourself:** Pain can make you feel vulnerable, drained and sometimes a bit lost. Your body is amazing and can sort most issues out by itself but sometimes it needs some help. By adapting and adjusting things that are sore, you are not giving into the problem but instead, working with it.

**Get yourself moving:** Movement is medicine for your body. Any movement is good movement, even if it is sore, however if something is really painful then working around that movement is sensible.

Your back is strong and that won't have changed since your symptoms began. Although it is sore, it remains robust and moving your back as early as you can, will help improve your chances of a better overall outcome.

### Will it get better?

For most people, back pain will not be a pleasant experience but reassuringly, it does have the potential to get better. By understanding the issue as best you can and by adjusting what is sore to then allow you to explore some exercise/s, is often the best formula for success.

If you would like to know more about back pain or find a greater choice of exercises, you can explore our dedicated webpage.

**Search online:** [Norfolk and Waveney MSK services](#) 'upper back pain'

## Exercises



Sitting with your hands across your chest. Curl your top half forwards and crunch yourself into a ball.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



Sitting with your hands across your chest. Turn your top half round to the side.

Complete little and often throughout the day.



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