

## Back Pain in Children and Young People: An introduction

### Introduction

Back pain is common in children and young people. Studies have shown back pain affects over half of all children in primary and secondary school.

Back pain can be frightening and very painful. You may worry that it is something serious. However, your spine is one of the strongest parts of your body.

Most back pain comes from the working parts of your back - the muscles, ligaments and small joints. Lifestyle and poor posture often mean that your back is simply not working as it should. Usually, small changes in posture and lifestyle will improve back pain.

### Facts about back pain

- Good posture helps prevent back pain
- Research shows that three in five children spend more than 25 hours each week slouched in front of the TV or playing computer games
- Children spend 30 per cent of their time in school - prolonged sitting, uncomfortable seating and heavy school bags contribute to back pain
- Your back is meant to move - movement and exercise will help ease the pain
- Sedentary lifestyles and increasing levels of obesity cause many problems, including back pain
- Back pain is not usually due to serious disease

### How can I prevent back pain?

Active children develop better muscle strength. Strong back and stomach muscles help support good posture.

Most movement activities and sports are good for your back. One hour of exercise each day is recommended. When your back is painful, keep mobile and try to gently continue with your activities. Walking, swimming, cycling and dance are particularly beneficial.

Always try to remember to stand, sit, lie and move with a good posture.



For homework, sit in a supportive chair with your feet flat on the floor and with your hips slightly higher than your knees. Computer screens should be at eye level. It is important to take regular breaks to move around and adjust your posture.

Travel light. Your bag should not weigh more than five to ten per cent of your body weight. If possible, use a rucksack with straps on each shoulder to spread the load.

### What can be done to ease pain?

- Heat or cold can help
- Keep mobile and don't stay in one position too long
- Try to maintain a good posture
- Ask your pharmacist for advice on simple analgesics (pain relief) and dosage
- If your pain does not settle, or if you have other symptoms, seek advice from your GP or call Children's Physio Direct

### Other useful information

Other children's physiotherapy advice is available at [www.glos-care.nhs.uk](http://www.glos-care.nhs.uk)  
Follow links for 'Our Services' and 'Children and Young People' to find the Children's Physiotherapy page

### Contact Us

Gloucestershire Care Services NHS Trust  
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Children's Physio Direct  
Call: 0300 421 6980  
Monday to Friday, 9am to 12pm  
(excluding Bank Holidays)  
For 0-16 years (or 16-19 in full-time education)

## Your experience

Your views are important to us. If you need advice or have feedback on a community hospital in Gloucestershire, or on our community health or adult social care services, you can contact one of the advisers from our service experience team. All enquiries are completely confidential.

You can contact us between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

This leaflet can also be supplied in braille, audio format, PDF, large print, easy-read and other languages on request.

Telephone 0300 421 8313 (answerphone available outside office hours)

Email: [yourexperience@glos-care.nhs.uk](mailto:yourexperience@glos-care.nhs.uk)

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