

Upper Thoracic Pain

Thoracic Pain is not as common as neck and lower back pain. The pain may come on gradually or following an activity or movement. Pain can last for several weeks to several months, dependant on numerous factors.

There are several things that you can do to help manage your pain.

Thoracic spine facts

- Our spines are strong and respond well to movement. The thoracic spine provides most of our rotational range of movement through the trunk. It also moves forwards, backwards and side to side
- “The best posture is the next posture”. Spines are designed to move, so try to move regularly, during the day. Use the following exercises to help
- Keep active. Try to include physical activity in your day such as walking, yoga, swimming or cycling. There are many different activities that you can do, and it is important to do something that you enjoy
- Simple relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises can help to manage your pain alongside the exercises

The majority of back pain is not due to any serious pathology. However, if you develop any of the following symptoms, attend A&E immediately:

- Pain, tingling, weakness or numbness in both legs and or feet.
- Difficulty walking, feeling unsteady or uncoordinated, or legs giving way.
- Numbness or tingling around your genitals or buttocks.
- Reduced bladder or bowel control (wetting or pooing yourself).
- Difficulty when trying to pass urine.
- Loss of sensation in your genitals during sexual intercourse.
- A change in your ability to get or maintain an erection.

If you have any of the following, please consult your GP before starting physiotherapy:

- A history of cancer
- Unexplained weight loss over the previous 3 months
- Your pain is constant and severe despite painkillers
- You have severe pain at night preventing you from sleep
- Feel generally unwell, have a fever or a lot of sweating at night

Treatment

Exercises

Your back is designed for movement. Regular exercises can help to reduce tension and stiffness in your neck and back. Start gently with these exercises aiming to complete them little and often throughout the day. Gradually increase the number of exercises as you feel able to.

You don't have to complete all of them, find the ones that you feel are most beneficial.



Active protraction / retraction

Lean over a chair, holding the chair with one hand. Keep your back straight, shoulders back and knees slightly bent. With one arm, reach under the other as far as possible rotating and rounding your upper back.

Bring your arm back and reach back in the opposite direction as far as possible.

Keep your elbow bent to 90 degrees and look at your hand at all times. Repeat with your other arm.



Archery

Sit on the end of a chair. Extend both arms straight out in front of you. Slowly draw one arm back, until the hand is close to your face, palm facing you. Incorporate a rotation of the trunk into the movement. Return to the starting position and repeat.

Active full body rotation

Sit up straight and look directly ahead of you.

Cross your arms over your chest. Turn your shoulders to look behind you to one side as far as you can.

Turn back to the midline and then repeat to the other side.

Do not bend your body forward when you turn.

Turn your trunk while keeping your head level.



Shoulder blade squeeze

Tuck your chin slightly and keep your spine tall. With your arms relaxed on your side squeeze your shoulder blade together with shrugging them.

Gently relax the position and repeat.

If any of these exercises make your symptoms worse then reduce the frequency or stop them and consult your doctor. If after four to six weeks your backache is not improving, go back and see your doctor.

A delay in recovery rarely means that it is a serious problem, it's more likely that you may need some extra support to help you manage your back pain.

Contact us

East Berkshire: Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, Ascot, Bracknell

Call 0300 365 5678

Email MSKphysioadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk

West Berkshire: Wokingham, Newbury, Reading

Call 0118 955 0415

Email admin.rdgphysio@berkshire.nhs.uk



www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy