

# Say goodbye to back pain



OUR BACKS ARE SENSITIVE, PARTICULARLY IF WE'RE HUNCHING OVER A SCREEN OR NOT STANDING UP STRAIGHT. DR ELLIE CANNON REVEALS HOW TO SEE THE BACK OF BACK PAIN...

Back pain is a really common problem affecting more than 75 per cent of us at some point in our lives. For most people, it's not caused by a serious issue, but it may be related to poor posture, lack of exercise or a muscle strain. Knowing how best to protect your back can help keep you on the go and pain free.

## TEMPORARY PAIN

Most sufferers have what we call mechanical back pain, which is caused by a simple muscular strain. This tends to start quickly but then reduces, and gets better within a few weeks. We usually do not find out a specific cause. There may be some risk factors – for example, if you have a poor posture or if you don't exercise – which can result in a stiff spine.

## SERIOUS ISSUE

You only need to see the doctor with a bad back if it is very severe, ongoing and worsening over a few weeks, or if it is stopping you doing your everyday tasks. Very rarely, it is due to a serious issue that may cause difficulty controlling your bladder or bowels, numbness around your back passage or weakness in the legs. These are alarm bells to urgently seek medical help.



## GET THERAPY

Physical therapies, such as physiotherapy or osteopathy, can be useful to improve flexibility and strength. Alternatively, your doctor may feel you need injections if the pain is continuous. These injections reduce inflammation around the nerves or joints, and can help to reduce the pain and allow good movement. Very few people need surgery for back pain; doctors would always recommend trying other treatments first.

## SIT UP STRAIGHT

Bad backs don't just come from heavy lifting, but also from awkward positions such as twisting, as well as everyday bad postures. Sitting at a desk the wrong way is a common poor posture, if you sit slumped or keep turning to the side to work. Likewise, when you are driving you shouldn't be slouching forward. Always bend your knees when you lift something and try not to twist your back.



## REDUCE THE PAIN

When you have back pain, painkillers allow you to move normally and stop you stiffening up even more. Good options include paracetamol, ibuprofen, or aspirin: try to take them before the pain peaks. It is also worth looking at anti-inflammatory gels that you can rub into the skin. In addition, don't forget about heat treatments; heat pads or hot water bottles can be a useful addition to other types of pain relief.



## SORT IT EARLY

Up to 90 per cent of people recover from a bad back within a few weeks. Unfortunately though, for a small number of people, a bad back can become a chronic issue. A cycle of pain can develop, preventing you from moving and getting on with your life, worsening your mood and increasing the pain. This is why it is key at the outset to keep moving about and to take proper pain relief.



# Look younger with Lesley



Anti-ageing guru **Lesley Reynolds** reveals the latest treatments to help you stay youthful

Like the rest of us, our feet age. The skin thins, the soles lose plumpness and joints lose suppleness. But, with a few tricks, you can wear your summer shoes in style.

## SORTING OUT SPIDER VEINS

More than 60 per cent of us have spider veins on our feet, particularly around the ankles. This can leave people feeling very self-conscious when wearing sandals. Laser therapy is the most effective way to get rid of spider veins. With this procedure, a beam of light heats up the blood

vessel, closing it off and making it disappear. So, if you want to give it a go, try the new Lumecca IPL system – you may need up to six treatments, two weeks apart, with results lasting up to 18 months. The price of the therapy is from £80 a treatment.

## BANISHING BUNIONS

Bunions are usually caused by badly fitting shoes, especially pointy heels. You can try bunion pads and special insoles to relieve pressure. Mid-heel shoes with rounded toes for more wiggle room will also help. Surgery can remove them and realign the bones. Traditionally a painful procedure, it can now be carried out as a one-day operation. Walking can be difficult for a few weeks and you'll need to wear wide-fitting, low-heeled shoes for about six months.



## FILLING OUT FAT PADS

When the fatty pads that protect the base of the feet wear down, it can be painful to walk or stand for long periods. Shock-absorbent shoes offer a short-term solution to cushion feet. Silicone insoles may help.

If you want a long-term fix, a filler (normally used to plump up the face) can be injected to build up the fat pads. The effect will last from three to six months. Costs from £350.

## AND DON'T FORGET...

- Invest in leather because it allows a little more stretch.
- Always buy new shoes later in the day, when feet are slightly bigger, for a more accurate fit.
- Before a big do, spritz feet with a menthol pain-relieving spray to numb and cool them.
- We can secrete up to half a cup of sweat a day, but if you have excessively sweaty feet, it can be easily treatable with Botox. This can stop sweating at the source, and results can last four months or more. From £300.
- Always use a sunscreen with SPF30 on tops of feet.
- Cover age spots, broken veins and marks with a fake tan, or try a good corrective foundation like Vichy Dermablend (£16).

For more information on Lesley and her team of doctors, visit [harleystreetskinclinic.com](http://harleystreetskinclinic.com)



## GET MOVING

Gone are the days when we advise bed rest for a bad back – you need to move. Bed rest for more than a day or two has been shown to worsen a bad back, as joints and muscles stiffen. Take painkillers and start moving gently: as your back gets stronger and more flexible, the pain will reduce. Yoga, Pilates, walking and swimming are all low impact and good choices.