Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Attending the Back Rehabilitation Programme

Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Attending the Back Rehabilitation Programme

Patient and Carer Information

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Services

- Author ID: KT
- Leaflet ref: Phy 070
- Version: 2
- Leaflet title: Attending the Back Rehabilitation Programme
- Date Produced: January 2026
- Expiry Date: January 2028

Why have I been referred?

You will have been assessed by a Physiotherapist who feels that you will benefit from a supervised group exercise programme, coupled with an interactive education component, aimed to offer you advice on how to self-manage your back pain.

Research suggests that exercise is the best conservative treatment for people with lower back pain. The evidence shows that exercise can reduce pain and improve overall function. Other kinds of treatment can be helpful in the short term, but doing exercises appears to make the biggest difference in the long term.

To get the best results from this programme, you should do the exercises at home on a regular basis as well. If your physiotherapist gave you some exercises to carry out before the class, continue with these.

What should I expect from Back Rehabilitation Programme?

The classes will take place once a week for six weeks. During each class you will do an hour of circuit-based exercises, which have been chosen to specifically to improve the range of movement, flexibility, strength and function of your spine.

On your first session you are invited to a 45-minute induction. Here the Physiotherapist will induct you around the class and demonstrate each exercise. You will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire, and 3 basic exercise tests. These will be repeated on session 6 to monitor your progress.

The group-based exercise circuit is progressive and suited to individual need; there is an easy, medium and hard option to choose.

The classes are supervised by Physiotherapists who will check that you are doing the exercises correctly and safely. If you feel that your pain is worsening when doing the exercise class, please tell your Physiotherapist

At the end of the exercise session there will be a short interactive group-based education presentation on a selected topic. These are to help you have a better understanding about your back pain, and advice on how to self-manage.

How does exercise help?

Exercise can help to:

- Improve flexibility, strength, endurance and fitness, all of which help in the prevention and treatment of back pain
- Improve mood and mental wellbeing
- Reduce the risk of other health problems, such as heart problems, diabetes or obesity

People often feel nervous about moving and exercising when they have pain. However, it has been shown that exercise can build confidence to move and exercise more freely, therefore helping you to return to your daily activities.

What should I do once the classes are finished?

Some people do not see big improvements straight away. Generally, muscle takes longer than just six weeks to start strengthening – it can take a few months before you get the most favourable result. Therefore, it is important to **stay motivated and carry on with the exercises** even when the classes are finished.

It is just as important to continue exercising even if your pain settles during the programme. There is evidence that regular exercise may reduce the risk of your pain coming back.

What happens if my pain comes back?

By following the advice and exercises given to you in the classes, you will be reducing the risk of future flare-ups. Unfortunately, there are no treatments that can guarantee that your pain will not return. If you do experience a flare-up of your pain, what you do in the early stages is very important.

1. Don't panic – Stress has been shown to increase pain. Remember that serious damage is very rare and often pain may flare up and then settle down again quickly.

2. Control your pain – There are a number of treatments you might find helpful. The most effective can often be painkillers. Don't hesitate to take them if you need them. Talk with your General Practitioner (GP) / Pharmacist about the best medicine for you. Other things that may help are heat and cold packs to reduce pain and relax your muscles.

3. Exercise and stay active – It is best to continue with gentle exercises and to keep going to work. Even though some things that you do may be painful, moving gently will not damage your back.

Hopefully by completing the exercise programme, we have given you the best tools to help manage these flare-ups yourself.

When should I contact my doctor?

Although back pain can be severe and worrying, it is rarely a sign of serious illness. However, if your symptoms change dramatically, or if you feel unwell with your back pain, you should see your GP.

Useful websites

https://www.arthritis-uk.org/

www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain/



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