

## The top 10 minor illnesses which can be treated at home are:

- **Constipation** - if it is uncomplicated, you have had it for less than seven days and haven't yet tried over the counter remedies to treat it
- **Lower back pain** - which can be treated with painkillers available from the chemist
- **Eczema** - which is mild to moderate (in patients over 12 years old) and can be managed with remedies available at the chemist
- **Sore throat** - which is likely to be caused by a virus and has lasted for less than two weeks
- **Fever** - in children over six months old, without serious underlying causes. If the fever lasts for more than five days or if more serious symptoms develop, see a GP
- **Heartburn and indigestion** - if Minor. If your symptoms do not clear up within two weeks or get a lot worse, you should see your GP
- **Coughs** - which are uncomplicated and probably caused by a virus
- **Simple strains or sprains** - which can be managed by over the counter painkillers
- **Headaches** - which are uncomplicated and have lasted less than three days - try medicines available from the pharmacy first
- **Acne** - mild to moderate, which can be managed by over the counter products



**think!**  
right treatment  
right place



## Lower back pain

**Many minor illnesses can be treated at home without the need to visit your GP.**

**Please THINK - get the right treatment in the right place and make sure we keep GP appointments and urgent care services for those who really need them. Unnecessary GP appointments for minor illnesses cost the NHS £2 billion a year.**



Your local pharmacy can give help and advice and many products available there can ease your symptoms and support your recovery. If you are unsure call 111 for immediate advice.



You can also check your symptoms at [www.nhs.uk/symptomchecker](http://www.nhs.uk/symptomchecker)

# Here is some advice on how to treat your current condition now and in the future.



## What is lower back pain?

- Lower back pain is tension, soreness and/or stiffness in the lower back, usually not as a result of any underlying cause or illness
- Even if it's very painful, back pain is rarely due to a serious underlying cause
- Your back is likely to get better within 6-12 weeks and often sooner, but you may still experience some occasional twinges and aches
- Back pain usually gets better without medical treatment or surgery and you are unlikely to need any X-rays or other tests
- You should try and get back to normal activities and movement as soon as you can as this usually helps your back
- A hot water bottle, bath or heat pads can help ease symptoms of tense muscles, and an ice pack or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a wet cloth and applied to the area can relieve discomfort from sudden back pain
- Rub-on treatments or painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective in most cases. You can try stronger medicines like codeine if they do not work. All are available from your pharmacy
- You can try different sleeping positions to ease your back, such as putting a pillow under your knees
- Physiotherapy, acupuncture or seeing a chiropractor or osteopath can also help (make sure they are registered)

## When should I seek medical help?

- If your symptoms do not improve within three days or if the back pain recurs regularly for more than six weeks, contact your GP
- Seek immediate medical advice if you notice any of the following, which could suggest a more serious condition:
  - Severe back pain which gets a lot worse
  - Feeling generally unwell as well as having back pain
  - If you have a temperature of more than 38°C or 100.4°F as well as back pain
  - If you have back pain which travels up into higher areas of your chest
  - If your pain started after a major injury or fall
  - If you are under 20 years old or over 50 years old and have back pain for the first time
  - If you have severe night-time pain which interferes with your sleep
  - If you have become unsteady on your feet since the back pain started
  - If you are losing weight for no apparent reason
  - If you feel numb or notice pins and needles around your bottom, genitals or in both of your legs
  - If you cannot control your urine or bowels



Ask your pharmacist for advice or find some more information here:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/back-pain)