

- Paracetamol is often sufficient if you take it regularly at full strength. For an adult, this is 1000 mg (usually two 500 mg tablets), four times a day.
- Anti-inflammatory painkillers. Some find that these work better than paracetamol. They include ibuprofen which you can buy at pharmacies or get on prescription. Other types such as diclofenac or naproxen will require a prescription.
- A stronger painkiller such as codeine is an option if anti-inflammatories do not suit or do not work well. Codeine is often taken in addition to paracetamol. Constipation is a common side-effect from codeine. This may make back pain worse if you need to strain to go to the toilet. To prevent constipation, have lots to drink and eat foods with plenty of fibre.

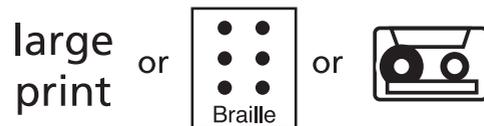
Some people may not be able to take anti-inflammatories. If you suffer with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure, or heart failure. Please always check with your GP or Pharmacist if you are unsure and always read the label before taking any medications.

Other treatments

Heat such as a hot bath may help to ease your pain.

You may also be referred for physiotherapy.

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Patient Information
and Guidance
Spinal Stenosis

This information is for those who have spinal stenosis. This information and guidance leaflet gives you the best and most up to date advice on what to expect and how to manage it.

What is spinal stenosis?

The cause of the spinal stenosis can be due to a number of reasons, including problems from birth or it can be acquired as you get older. Wear and Tear in the joints and discs of the spine can lead to the narrowing around the nerves.

It is not a serious condition and happens commonly as you get older.

It is possible to investigate the amount of compression on your nerves via an MRI scan.

Some Important Facts

In many cases spinal stenosis will resolve over time and preferably without surgery. The majority of patients followed up over 10 years remain unchanged (60-70%), a minority worsen (15-20%) whilst some (15-20%) improve.

What are the symptoms?

Your symptoms may include intermittent low back ache, buttock and leg pain, sometimes with pins and needles, numbness, weakness and cramping sensations. These are brought on by walking and standing, and relieved by sitting or flexed postures (leaning forward). Your symptoms may also occur at night.

Treatment can be conservative with physiotherapy and painkillers helping to reduce the pain. Only in some cases surgery is required.

If you are referred for an MRI you may have a further consultation with a Physiotherapist, Doctor or Surgeon to discuss your case in more detail.

What can I do to help myself?

Exercise and keep going

Limit your activities that will aggravate your pain, walking to increase strength and fitness, and maintaining a reasonable weight all can help.

As a rule, don't do anything that causes a lot of pain, but don't be frightened of it either, you will have to accept some discomfort when you are trying to keep active. We recommend setting a new goal each day, for example, walking around the house on one day followed by a short walk to the shops the next.



Sleep

Sleep in the most naturally comfortable position on whatever is the most comfortable surface. There is no evidence to say that a firm mattress is better than any other type of mattress for people with low back pain. Some people find that a small firm pillow between the knees when sleeping on their side helps to ease night time symptoms.

Work

If you work, aim to get back to work as soon as possible, there is no need to wait for complete freedom from pain before returning to work. Returning to work often helps to relieve pain by getting back to a normal pattern of activity and provides a distraction from the pain.

In the past, advice had always been to rest until the pain eases, which we now know is incorrect. You are likely to recover quickly by getting moving again, and getting back to work as soon as possible. By doing this you are less likely to develop chronic persistent back pain if you keep active when you have pain rather than simply resting.

Medication

If you need painkillers, take them regularly, taking them 'now and again' just when the pain is very bad will give you peaks of pain. Whereas if you take them regularly the pain is more likely to be eased for much of the time and enable you to exercise, work and remain active.