

Back Pain Myths

'I should go to bed and rest when I have back pain'

When you experience an episode of back pain you may feel like the best thing to do is go to bed and rest. However, although a small amount of rest during the day may be good for you - the best thing to do is to carry on with normal activities as much as possible. This will be made easier taking suitable painkillers on the advice of your doctor or pharmacist.

'I have back pain-it must be something serious-like cancer'

Back pain is usually caused by nothing more than a sprain or strain of the muscles or ligaments of the back. Only around one per cent of people with back pain have something potentially serious causing their pain, but if you are concerned about anything - ask your GP.

'My doctor has told me I have arthritis in my spine, does this mean my spine is crumbling?'

No. Arthritis is often described as 'wear and tear' or in medical terms - 'spondylosis' - both mean the same thing. They describe the normal aging process of bones and joints. Just as hair goes grey and skin goes wrinkly, bones and joints age too - this is arthritis.

'My pain has gone on for months now - this must mean something is serious is wrong.'

Not necessarily. Back pain tends to have good and bad periods - this is entirely normal. If you are worried about how your back pain is progressing then make an appointment with your G.P.

'My doctor has carried out tests, but the results were normal, does this mean that I am imagining my back pain?'

Certainly not! Your doctor may have carried out a series of tests to check for specific diseases. The results, if negative are usually good news as it means you don't have the condition that your doctor was testing for. This does not mean that your pain isn't real.

'I can't return to work/sport until my pain has completely gone'

Wrong. Activity is good for your body and especially your spine. Work is not bad for your spine and will certainly not damage it. However, you may still experience some pain whilst participating in sport or at work, but this tends to improve with time. Visit our self-help resources section for tips and advice on managing back pain.

'I have back pain/sciatica, do I need an X-Ray?'

No. X-rays are not very good at picking up back problems other than arthritis, which most of us will get as we grow older.

'I have back pain/sciatica, do I need an MRI Scan?'

An MRI scan will show a clear picture of the spine and its bones, joints, discs and nerves. However, an MRI scan is usually used when we think there may be a need for surgery.

'I have had back pain several times, does this mean I will end up in a wheelchair?'

No.