

Low back pain and sciatica

RFQs

- Do you have control of your water works?
- Can you feel the toilet tissue when you wipe your backside? Have you noticed any weakness or numbness?
- Is the pain with you all the time, or do some things make it easier?
- Have you ever had cancer?
- How has your weight been? Do you have any other symptoms?
- Before we choose a pain killer for you, can I check: is your blood pressure well controlled? Have you ever had an ulcer?
- How have you been emotionally? How is this pain affecting your activities? Both at work and elsewhere?

Provide

Since your blood pressure is well controlled, and you have never had an ulcer, you might want to use an anti-inflammatory pain killer such as naproxen, or ibuprofen. Can I check that these tablets have never made you wheeze. There is a small risk (10%) that they could make patients with asthma worse. Stop them if that happens. For those who are not able to take anti-inflammatories we often use short term codeine or tramadol. Again these have risks, and side effects, and should not normally be used for more than 2 weeks.

It's important that we make sure that your pain is adequately relieved, so that you can get mobile again. That's the best treatment for you.

Safety net:

If you are feeling that you might never get better, then it would be worth considering arranging physiotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, or another talking therapy, to help you to cope. and to get you to be more active.

I'm not worried about your back pain just now, especially since it came on suddenly, without a nasty injury. Features that would make me more concerned about your back pain might be:

Gradual onset of morning stiffness that lasts for more than an hour after getting up.

Pain that is not eased with rest. In fact, I need to see you if you are consistently getting night pain that disturbs your sleep. (Activity is usually a good thing for the back.)

If your back pain isn't eased by what I have recommended for you, sufficiently to allow you to get mobile again, please make a phone appointment with me. Or if you are having side effects with the medication.

I would need to see you urgently if you lose control of your bladder, if you can't feel the toilet paper when you wipe yourself, or if you experience weakness or numbness. Otherwise, let me see you if you are not improving within 4 to 6 weeks.