



# SPINAL INFORMATION GUIDE

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## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

There is a condition called 'Cauda Equina Syndrome' which requires emergency specialist spinal input to avoid leading to permanent damage or disability.

If you are having any of these symptoms associated with your back and leg pain, worsening numbness or weakness in your legs, seek immediate emergency support.

Loss of sensation or tingling in your genitals and inner thighs

Numbness in and around your buttocks and back passage

Loss of sensation when wiping yourself with toilet paper

Increasing difficulty when you urinate

Urine retention (not having passed urine within the last 8-12 hours)

Increasing difficulty when you try to stop or control your flow of urine

Loss of sensation when you pass urine

Leaking urine or recent need to use pads

Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty

Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking

Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion

Change in ability to achieve an erection or ejaculate

Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse

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## WARNING SIGNS CHECK: COMPLETE

As Physiotherapists we always advise patients to check if they are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above **in addition** to their back and leg pain, numbness and weakness.

If you do not have any of the warning symptoms listed above, it's recommended by the **National Institute of Clinical Excellence** and by **Chartered Physiotherapists, GPs and Consultants** that you exercise to improve core muscles to manage your back pain and reduce your risk of your back pain returning.

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## WHY DO I KEEP GETTING BACK PAIN?

There are many reasons why people can suffer back pain episodes but the top most common reasons are:

- Poor Posture
- Poor core stability
- Joint stiffness
- Weak back muscles
- Tight hamstrings
- Reduced balance
- Poor proprioception (the awareness of where your joints are)
- Prolonged sitting or static postures
- Repetitive postures or heavy lifting
- Poor training techniques with gym based tasks
- Poor habits with functional activities, such as bad lifting techniques when lifting heavy items
- Working in tight spaces or awkward postures, e.g. Plumbers, Paramedics, nurses, manual workers, mechanics to name a few!

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## HOW CAN I MANAGE MY ACUTE BACK PAIN?

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As Specialist Physiotherapists we advise:

- Keep active by taking regular walks
- Breaking up static postures during your day (standing up after 20-25 minutes if you have been sitting to off load the static loading going through your spine).
- Use warm baths, warm hot water bottles or heat pads to reduce muscle spasm.
- Follow a regular exercise programme such as our Specialist Pilates back pain exercises that we guide you through step by step.
- See a **Physiotherapist** or **GP** to check your symptoms if your symptoms **do not start to resolve within 6-12 weeks** despite following the above advice and partaking in regular Pilates exercises such as our Specialist Pilates Online sequences.

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## DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

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Our **Specialist Pilates Online** back pain videos have been specifically designed by Specialist Physiotherapists to address all the risk factors associated with back pain. They will rehabilitate you to improve your spinal health leading to an overall reduction of back pain in the longer term.

Start with the Specialist Pilates Online **beginner exercises** and aim to practice Pilates **at least 2-3 times a week**, minimum. Try to incorporate **good postures during your day** to help compliment your routines. We have produced some chair based exercises and neural stretches that you can do at work to help control your symptoms through the day.

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## INFLAMMATORY SPINAL CONDITIONS

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'Spondyloarthropathies' refers to a group of several different diseases which includes:

- Ankylosing spondylitis
- Psoriatic arthritis
- Reactive arthritis
- Undifferentiated spondyloarthropathy
- Inflammatory bowel disease-associated arthritis.

Each one of these conditions is unique in its individual characteristics. All of them can involve inflammation of the axial skeleton (spine and sacroiliac joints).

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## SPONDYLOARTHROPATHIES MAY BE CAUSING YOU OTHER ASSOCIATED SYMPTOMS LINKED WITH THE SPONDYLOARTHRITIS SUCH AS:

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- Pain at the sites where tendons and ligaments attach to bone (Enthesis pain)
- Your arthritis may be related to the skin condition, psoriasis (psoriatic spondyloarthritis)
- Your arthritis may be related to bowel conditions, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis (Enteropathic arthritis)
- Your arthritis might be worse after an infection (reactive spondyloarthritis)
- Tiredness Pain and swelling in your finger and toe joints
- Tenderness at the base of your pelvis
- Chest pain
- Eye inflammation

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## I HAVE ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

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**Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS)** predominantly affects the spine and may lead to severe stiffness of the back, pain into the sacroiliac joints (joints where the base of the spine meets the pelvis), the buttocks or back of the thigh.

**Spondylitis** means inflammation in the joints causing aching and stiffness in the back, it may settle down, but may also persist for many years despite medications prescribed by your GP or Specialist.

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## CAN I EXERCISE WITH ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS?

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Exercise is strongly recommended to help AS and it's advised you stay as active as possible. Our Specialist Pilates Online videos will provide you with a gentle and effective way to exercise your back with breathing control that will help incorporate regular exercise into your day to day routine.

Our Specialist Pilates Online videos are suitable for patients with AS, alongside other inflammatory conditions and is one of the most important things that you can do to help yourself.

Postural exercises are essential to stop your posture from becoming more stooped and bent over and it's also vital to: increase range of movement; improve breathing control; improve balance, muscle strength and flexibility; and to help keep symptoms manageable.

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## WHAT IS LUMBAR SPINAL STENOSIS AND CAN I DO SPECIALIST PILATES ONLINE?

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**Lumbar spinal stenosis** is a common cause of back and lower leg symptoms in the elderly, affecting approximately **1 in 1000 of people aged over 65**.

Narrowing of the spinal canal can lead to symptoms in the buttocks, calf and anterior thigh with low back pain and is usually aggravated by long distance walking, repetitive bent over or stooped postures. Symptoms can be relieved by resting or sitting down briefly.

**Our Specialist Pilates Online exercises are suitable for Lumbar Spinal Stenosis** and we advise you start with the beginner or our chair based exercises for at least 6 weeks before trying higher level exercises or during any flare ups. A high volume of people use the beginner level exercises on a permanent, long term basis to manage their symptoms effectively to keep their symptoms at bay.

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You can find all our back and spinal exercises routines under the 'Spinal' category' under channels. You can search 'Spinal' under the search section or search by keyword(s) such as 'back pain'. Suitable videos will appear, simply select the level you wish to exercise at: beginner, intermediate or advanced level.



## AUTHORS

This guide has been written by our Specialist Pilates Online Physiotherapists based on their clinical experience with supporting evidence from, and thanks to:

National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society (NASS)

[www.nass.co.uk](http://www.nass.co.uk)

National Institute of Clinical Excellence

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

Arthritis Research UK

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