BACK to Health Programme

Don’t let your back get the better of you!
Introduction

In recent years studies have shown that 30 million days were lost from work as a result of MSK problems and a substantial proportion was from low back pain. Back pain is the largest single cause of disability in the UK. It has been estimated that the lifetime prevalence of back pain is reported to be as high as 84%, and the prevalence of chronic low back pain is about 23%, with 11—12% of the population being disabled by low back pain. It has been researched over the years that the cost of informal care, and the associated costs related to LBP relates to 2% of the British GDP.

An episode Low Back Pain impacts sufferers in everyday activities and may limit their ability to do simple tasks at home, at work, or socially and have knock on impact to family, friends, or colleagues. Back pain is a common disorder affecting around one-third of the UK adult population each year. Nearly everyone is affected by it at some point in their lives. For most people suffering from back pain, substantial pain or disability is short lived and they soon return to normal daily activities. A small proportion, however, develop chronic pain and disability.

In 2009 the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) published clinical guidelines regarding the management of persistent non-specific low back pain in adults lasting longer than six weeks. The evidence for the treatment of persistent back pain NICE has stated that “staying physically active is likely to be beneficial.”

The National Spinal Taskforce (2013) recommended for non-specific spinal pain that Commissioners should ensure a properly constructed Combined Physical and Psychological programme is commissioned. This is the most serious gap in current services and should be urgently addressed. The type of programme recommended by NICE is available in their guideline CG88.

A key message in the NICE guidelines is the importance of helping people with persistent non-specific back pain in assisting them to self-manage their condition. The BACK to Health Programme provided by South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust aims to achieve this. The guidelines stress the importance of regular physical activity and exercise in combination with education.

70 to 80% of people will experience a significant episode of back pain some time in their lives. It should be seen as a normal part of life.
The NICE guidelines supported by the National Spinal Taskforce (led by Sir Bruce Keogh) recommend the following:

**Physical activity:**
- A structured exercise programme tailored to the patient
- A supervised exercise programme in a group of up to eight patients
- A combined physical and psychological treatment including cognitive behavioural approach and exercise, comprising 100 hours over a maximum of eight weeks

**Exercise programmes:**
- Aerobic activity
- Muscle strengthening
- Postural control
- Stretching

**Education:**
- Advice and information to promote self-management
- Information about the nature of low back pain
- Information regarding the importance of being physically active and continuing normal activities as far as possible

The BACK to Health Programme includes all of the components recommended in the NICE guidelines for non-specific low back pain in adults lasting longer than six weeks.

**What is the BACK to Health Programme?**
The BACK to Health Programme runs over two years and is based on a multi-disciplinary approach. It involves an initial three week residential, intensive exercise and educational programme with an emphasis on pacing of activities, long term self-management and goal planning.

The BACK to Health Programme runs Monday to Thursday from 09.00 to 17.00, with patients returning home from Friday to Sunday. Due to the residential element of the programme, patients will stay in a hotel during the week, the cost of which is funded by the NHS through local Clinical Commissioning Group.

Treatment is group based and up to ten patients can attend the Programme. There will follow-up sessions with the therapists to evaluate progress.

Please note: There is no individual hands-on treatment and you will not see a doctor or undergo any further medical investigations.

The BACK to Health Programme moves away from seeking a medical cure or reduction in pain intensity, focusing instead on self-management through education sessions, tailored exercises, psychological support and practical coping and problem-solving strategies.
The aim and objectives of the BACK to Health programme is to allow people with persistent pain to develop techniques and strategies to allow them to minimise the impact of their pain on their quality of life. During the Programme this will be achieved by:

- A movement and exercise programme to improve strength, stamina, range of movement and promote resilience
- Education into the cause and nature of persistent pain with particular emphasis on the distinction between pain and damage
- Working on valued based goals to make a return to an active lifestyle using planning and pacing techniques
- Cognitive therapy to understand the links between beliefs, fears, thoughts, and subsequently mood and pain, and to learn techniques of identifying unhelpful patterns of thinking and develop effective challenges
- Reduction in unhelpful pain related medications
- Reduction in reliance on rest and challenging ‘boom/bust behaviour’
- To develop a range of relaxation techniques to reduce pain and aid sleep.
- To improve range and style of strategies to manage increases in pain.

To achieve these objectives you must:

- Want to regain control of your life by applying self-management
- Skills through individual and group activities
- Be willing to assess your lifestyle and think about relevant and realistic adaptations in your daily activities that could help manage your pain
- Be motivated to attend all sessions and put in the effort to achieve your goals

Back pain and flare ups happen. With time, knowledge and the right tools YOU can improve your back health.
What can I expect the sessions to involve?

The course combines the following components:

**Education:** Advice on anatomy, posture, good seating, pacing activities, fitness, how the body heals, lifting and handling, dealing with a flare up, relaxation, acute versus persistent pain, effects of exercise on the body and problem solving

**Physical:** Stretching, exercising in water, postural and strength muscle retraining, use of the fitness gym, use of the gym ball and returning to gentle recreational activity.

**Coping skills:** Addressing the emotional and behavioural effects of long-term pain, understanding pain, stress and anxiety, mood management, communicating with friends and family, maintaining change, assertiveness and the use of goal setting to improve coping strategies

Is the programme right for me?
The BACK to Health Programme treats patients with non-specific low back pain who have not responded to treatment. Patients need to be prepared to stay residential accommodation (Hotel) for three weeks (go home at weekends) and to participate in a group based programme (accommodation is provided as part of the programme). We appreciate this may be a major commitment for you but hopefully it will change your life. Because of the physical nature of the programme, patients must be able to perform personal care, for example, independent washing and dressing, be able to walk independently for 15 minutes or 500 metres and have good general medical health.

Before you start the three-week course, you will need to attend a half-day assessment, which gives you the opportunity to:

- Meet the team
- Discuss whether the programme is suitable for you
- Have a tour of the facilities
- Meet other people who are considering the programme
- Discuss arrangements that may need to be considered prior to your attendance, for example, childcare, booked holidays and work
Benefits of the Combined physical and psychological programme (CPPP)

 Whilst there may be no cure to your back pain there are many benefits the CPPP can offer. The only current CPPP running is the Active Back Programme in London. The benefits and feedback that they have received from patients is very high.

 - 86% of participants rated the programme as excellent or very good
 - 92% of participants rated group work as excellent or very good
 - More than half of the patients on long term sick-leave return to work
 - The majority of patients struggling to remain at work because of back pain are able to do so

 The formal outcome measures that are used demonstrate statistically significant improvements in pain, disability, physical function, mental function and job status. A reduction in the use of medication was seen alongside a reduced frequency in visiting health professionals in relation to back problems.

 Patients have told Active Back how they have found the CPPP helpful.

 “The programme helped me cope with my pain. It was very helpful to talk and listen to people who understand."

 “My problem [back pain] is still there but this has helped me with my fear of exercise and increased my activity.”

 “I think the course definitely addresses how to cope with the pain both physically and psychologically.”

 “I think it helped me to understand my condition and some methods of coping with pain. Also, seeing people deal with their pain and how they cope helps.”

 “The Active Back programme is lifesaving, both mentally and physically. It has turned my coping levels from 0/10 to 10/10”

 “The programme provides a fantastic service for everyone, time well spent”

 “This has really helped me understand and cope with my pain in daily life”

 “If we had stayed in hospital grounds…thoughts of ill health…I am not ill”

 “The ABP has changed my life for the better. I feel like I can achieve anything”
Where will the BACK to Health Programme take place?

The BACK to Health Programme will take place at the Sporting Lodge Hotel, Low Lane, Stainton Village, Middlesbrough, Teesside, TS17 9LW.

The Sporting Lodge Hotel is located a short drive away from Durham Tees airport and the train station in Middlesbrough.

The residential course will include:

- An en suite room with television and tea/coffee making facilities.
- Free wifi access
- Direct telephones (participants will be required to settle any telephone costs at the end of each week.).
- Ironing Boards available upon request.
- Breakfast and lunch will be provided as a buffet.
- Evening meals will be catered for using a voucher system

Any cost beyond this you incur you are responsible for settling with the hotel.

http://www.sportinglodgeinns.co.uk/middlesbrough/experience
References
The treatment approach offered on the BACK to Health Programme is supported by:

- The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), Early Management of Persistent Non-Specific Low Back Pain (2009)
- The National Spinal Taskforce (2013): Commissioned and supported by Sir Bruce Keogh.
- Clinical Guidelines for the Physiotherapy Management of Persistent Low Back Pain – Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) 2009
- Musculoskeletal Services Framework - A Joint Responsibility: Doing it Differently, Department of Health (DOH) 2006