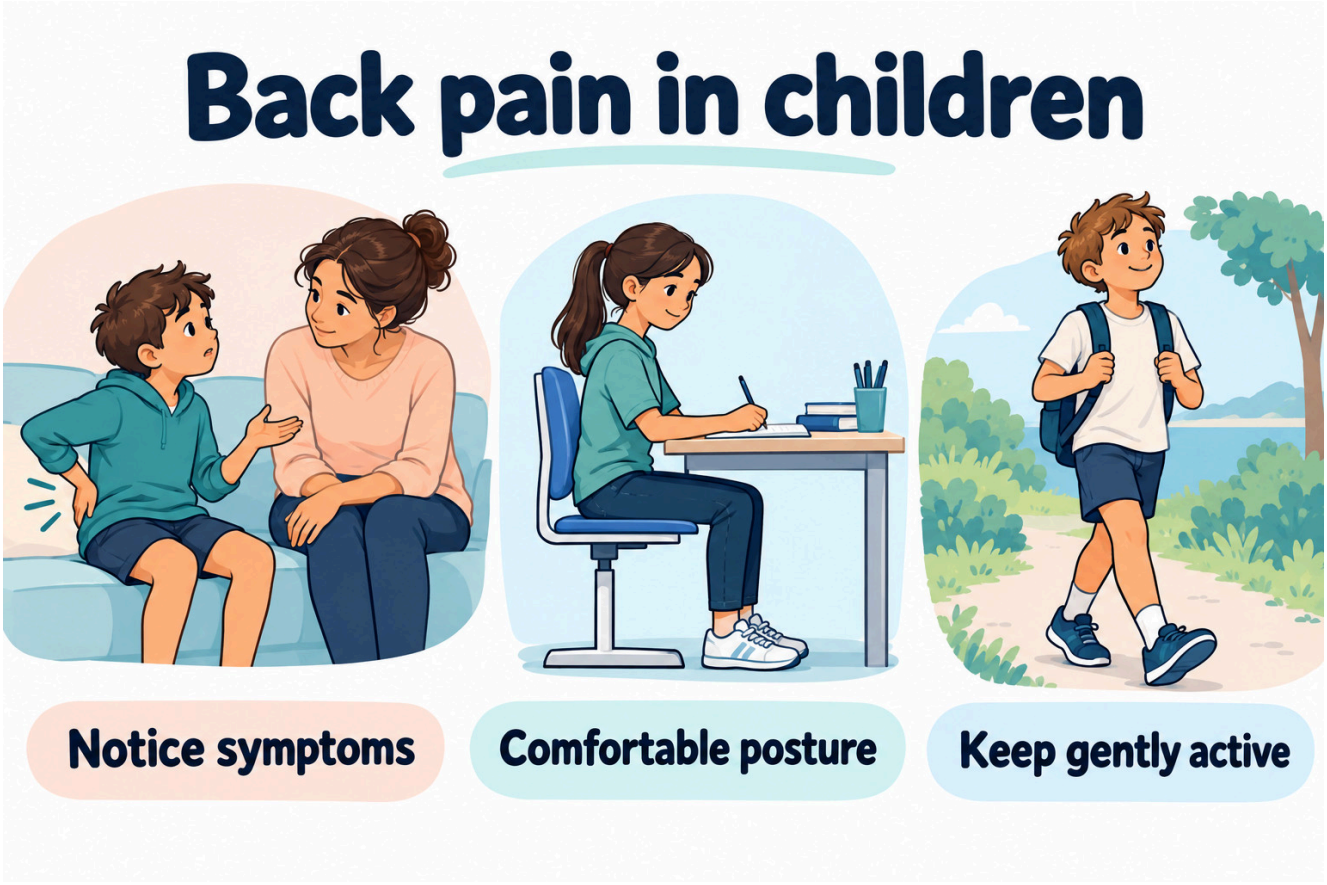
Back Pain in Children

Information for children, parents and carers

Back Pain in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding the condition

Back pain in children and teenagers often relates to muscle strain, activity, posture or minor injury. Most episodes improve with simple care, but persistent or unusual symptoms need assessment.

Supporting your child

Encourage gentle activity within comfort, adjust aggravating activities and seek advice if pain persists. Severe symptoms, night waking, walking changes or neurological symptoms need prompt assessment.

Symptoms and assessment

Understanding the cause and when to seek help

Common causes

Muscle strain may follow sport, heavy school bags or a sudden increase in activity. Long periods in awkward positions, falls, lifting or twisting can also contribute to symptoms.

Less common causes

Stress injury in the lower back, scoliosis, structural kyphosis, inflammatory conditions and disc irritation may cause pain. A clinician can assess symptoms that do not settle or fit a simple strain.

What might your child notice?

Back or buttock pain, stiffness after rest, symptoms with lifting or sport, muscle tightness, or difficulty sitting or standing for long periods. Tell the clinician how symptoms affect daily life.

What does assessment involve?

The clinician asks about symptoms and examines movement, posture, flexibility, strength and walking. Scans are not usually needed unless there are features suggesting another cause.

Warning signs needing assessment

Severe or worsening pain, regular night waking, leg weakness, numbness or tingling, difficulty walking, bowel or bladder problems, fever, weight loss, significant injury or a new spinal shape change need prompt assessment.

Key message

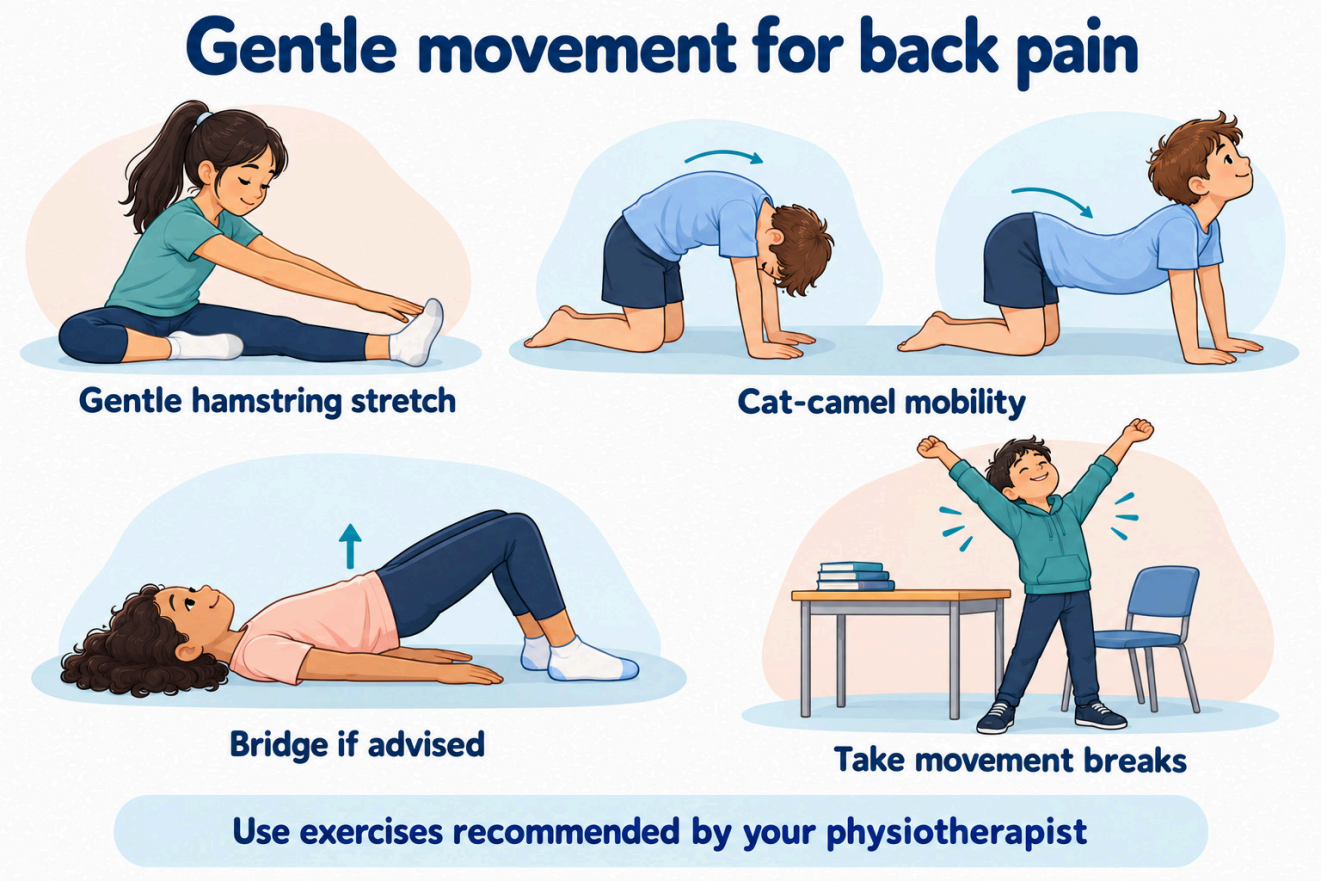
Encourage gentle activity within comfort, adjust aggravating activities and seek advice if pain persists. Severe symptoms, night waking, walking changes or neurological symptoms need prompt assessment.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Activity guided by your child's healthcare team

Before starting activity

Use exercises recommended for your child's symptoms. Keep movement gentle and comfortable; do not start a routine when warning signs need assessment.



Activity guidance

Hamstrings: gentle stretch, hold 20-30 seconds each side.
Cat-camel: on hands and knees, move gently; repeat 10-15 times.
Core: bridges or gentle abdominal work if advised.
Breaks: change position regularly during screen use.

Important precautions

Stop if exercises worsen pain. Seek urgent assessment for severe pain, leg weakness or numbness, difficulty walking, bowel or bladder changes, fever or pain after significant injury.

Treatment and next steps

Caring for your child and finding support

Adjust activity during a flare

Avoid heavy lifting and high-impact sport while symptoms flare. Gentle walking, swimming or cycling may be comfortable. Return to sport gradually as pain settles, with physiotherapy guidance if needed.

Comfort and pain relief

Comfortably warm heat for 10-15 minutes may relax muscles; protect the skin and avoid excessive heat. Paracetamol or ibuprofen may help if suitable; follow age-appropriate instructions and professional advice.

Daily habits and recovery

Use a supportive chair with feet resting flat and take screen breaks every 30-45 minutes. Avoid very heavy bags and use both straps. Most simple episodes improve within 2-4 weeks; persistent symptoms need review.

Questions or concerns?

Seek assessment if pain is not improving after 2-4 weeks, wakes your child regularly, or worsens. Severe pain, weakness, altered sensation, walking or bowel/bladder changes, fever or significant injury need urgent review.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

0300 303 4811

bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net

www.bwellberkshire.co.uk