

NICE NHS Treatment Guidelines

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is an independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on promoting good health and preventing and treating ill health. In May 2009 they released guidelines about the care and treatment that people with persistent non-specific low back pain can expect from the NHS in England and Wales in order to help them manage their pain.

The guidelines cover people who have had low back pain (which can also affect the upper part of the legs) for more than six weeks, but less than a year.

The NICE guidelines state that:

- ◆ Patients with back pain should be offered exercise, manual therapy or acupuncture as the first line of treatments.
- ◆ If the patient's chosen treatment option is unsuccessful then they can choose a second treatment option.
- ◆ If the second treatment option is also unsuccessful the patient should then be offered an intensive exercise and psychological treatment programme.
- ◆ Health professionals should mention that staying active is the best way to improve back pain and give advice on how to manage it.
- ◆ All patients should be offered adequate medication which may include Paracetamol, NSAIDs, tricyclic antidepressants or opioids.
- ◆ Injections into the back are not recommended.
- ◆ The use of x-rays is not recommended and MRI scans are advised against unless there is the possibility of a patient referral for spinal fusion surgery.

What could the NICE guidelines mean for you?

The guidelines mean that if you have persistent non-specific low back pain you will have more of a say in how your back pain is treated. The availability of the combined exercise and psychological treatments also means that you will be offered help to deal with some of the other psychological issues surrounding back pain.

BackCare has collaborated with NICE to develop a patient information leaflet to give people more information about back pain and how they may use the available treatments - www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/CG88PatientInformationLeaflet.pdf

Your GP will also have information and will be able to direct you to where you can find out more about the treatment options. A patient copy of the guideline called 'Understanding NICE Guidance' is available to download from the NICE website at <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/pdf/CG88PublicInfo.pdf>

Call the BackCare Helpline on 0845 130 2704 for more information and support