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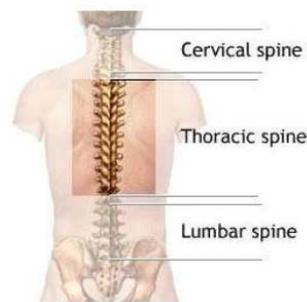
*Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy*  
**Information for patients**

# Managing Thoracic Back Pain

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## Introduction

The aims of this leaflet are to help you to understand what thoracic back pain is and to advise you how you can help manage your thoracic back pain. If you have any other questions that are not answered by this leaflet please ask your physiotherapist.



### What is thoracic back pain?

The thoracic spine is the middle part of the spine that runs in between the neck (cervical spine) and lower back (lumbar spine).

Pain in the thoracic spine is frequently caused by poor posture.

Those more at risk of developing thoracic back pain are those who sit for long periods of time. For example those working at a desk or driving.



### How can I help my thoracic back pain?

#### Correct poor posture

The ideal alignment of your spine is a subtle 'S' shape.

From the back, your spine will appear straight. From the side it should have three natural curves, an inward curve in your neck, an outward curve in your thorax and an inward curve in your lower back.

Your spine is at its strongest when in this position.



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### Good Sitting Posture

The key to good sitting posture is to maintain your lumbar curve.

To achieve a good sitting posture you should ensure that you are sitting right back in the chair and that your feet are supported either on the floor or on a foot rest. You should be sitting on the bony points in your buttocks and support the lumbar curve at the base of your spine with a small cushion or rolled up towel.

Initially it may feel strange or hard work to correct and maintain a good posture. This is normal as it takes time and practice for the muscles to strengthen to hold you in this position.

You should start by correcting your posture little and often. Try correcting your posture and holding it for a count of 10 seconds every 20 to 30 minutes.

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### **Change your position regularly**

It is important to change your position regularly to help prevent poor posture from occurring and muscles getting tight or sore, or joints stiff. Every 15 to 20 minutes is the recommendation made by most health care practitioners. For example if you have been sat down you could stand up and stretch out.

**Keep the thoracic spine flexible and strong by remaining active and trying some of the exercises below as directed by your physiotherapist:**

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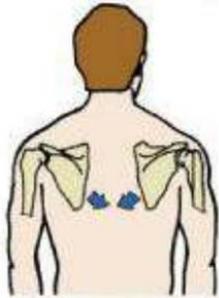
#### **How often should I exercise?**

- Try to exercise about 3 times a day. Be guided by your pain.

#### **Stop these exercises if you feel they are:**

- Making your symptoms worse or bringing on new pain.

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Sit tall and unsupported with the shoulders relaxed. Set your shoulder posture into neutral by drawing the shoulder blades gently down as if they were forming a 'V' shape. This should be a very subtle movement and it should not feel like you are shrugging or squeezing back the shoulder blades.

Hold up to 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times.

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Sit or stand tall, unsupported with the shoulders relaxed. Roll the shoulders backwards and then forwards.

Repeat up to 10 times.

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Sit on a chair with a back rest. Support your neck with your hands. Arch back over the top of the chair. Try to extend your thoracic spine and not your neck.

Repeat up to 10 times.

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In sitting, place your hands across your chest and then twist round to one side and then the other.

Repeat up to 10 times.



### For further information

Please ring our Booking Office on **0191 4452643** or visit our website at: **[www.tims.nhs.uk](http://www.tims.nhs.uk)** which provides online guidance and support on managing your musculoskeletal (MSK) condition effectively.

The NHS website also provides trusted online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare to help you manage your condition and/or inform your choices about your health: **[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

### Feedback

We also welcome feedback from patients about their experiences with our service and this can be done through our patient advice and liaison (PALS) team on **0800 032 0202** or **[northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)**

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### Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Service

TIMS is a partnership between Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust