

## Simple ways to ease back, neck and hip pain

Back, neck, and hip pains are among the most common medical problems in the UK. According to the arthritis charity Versus Arthritis, one in three people in the UK are affected. Musculoskeletal conditions, the medical name for bone and muscular aches, can affect people of any age. They're often debilitating and can affect mental as well as physical health. The good news is that you can do a lot to ease the pain and improve your quality of life.

### How to fix your poor posture

Your head is heavy, about 5kg, so leaning forward can strain the neck. Holding your head back, so your ears are above your shoulder will open up your chest and help maintain the spine's natural curvature. Another tip to protect your back and hips is to engage your tummy muscles as much as possible so that you don't sink into your pelvis and lower back.



### Lying down in the proper position

Pay attention to how you rest. If you can, invest in a good mattress, which can help ease pain while resting. A short-term measure can be to move the mattress onto the floor or place a board beneath it to offer your body more support. Equally important is a firm pillow that keeps your neck in alignment. If you suffer from hip pain and sleep on your side, try putting a pillow between your legs to help align your body correctly.

### Sitting, standing and lifting correctly

Keeping your body aligned and your core engaged is essential for good back, hip and neck health. Stand with your shoulders straight, chest forward, hips tucked in, and weight balanced evenly on both feet. When sitting, keep your hips and knees at a right angle and use a cushion to support the curve in your back. You might also find a pillow helpful when driving. To lift a heavy object, keep your back straight and bend at the knees rather than the waist. Keep your feet firm on the ground, pull your tummy muscles and lift slowly.

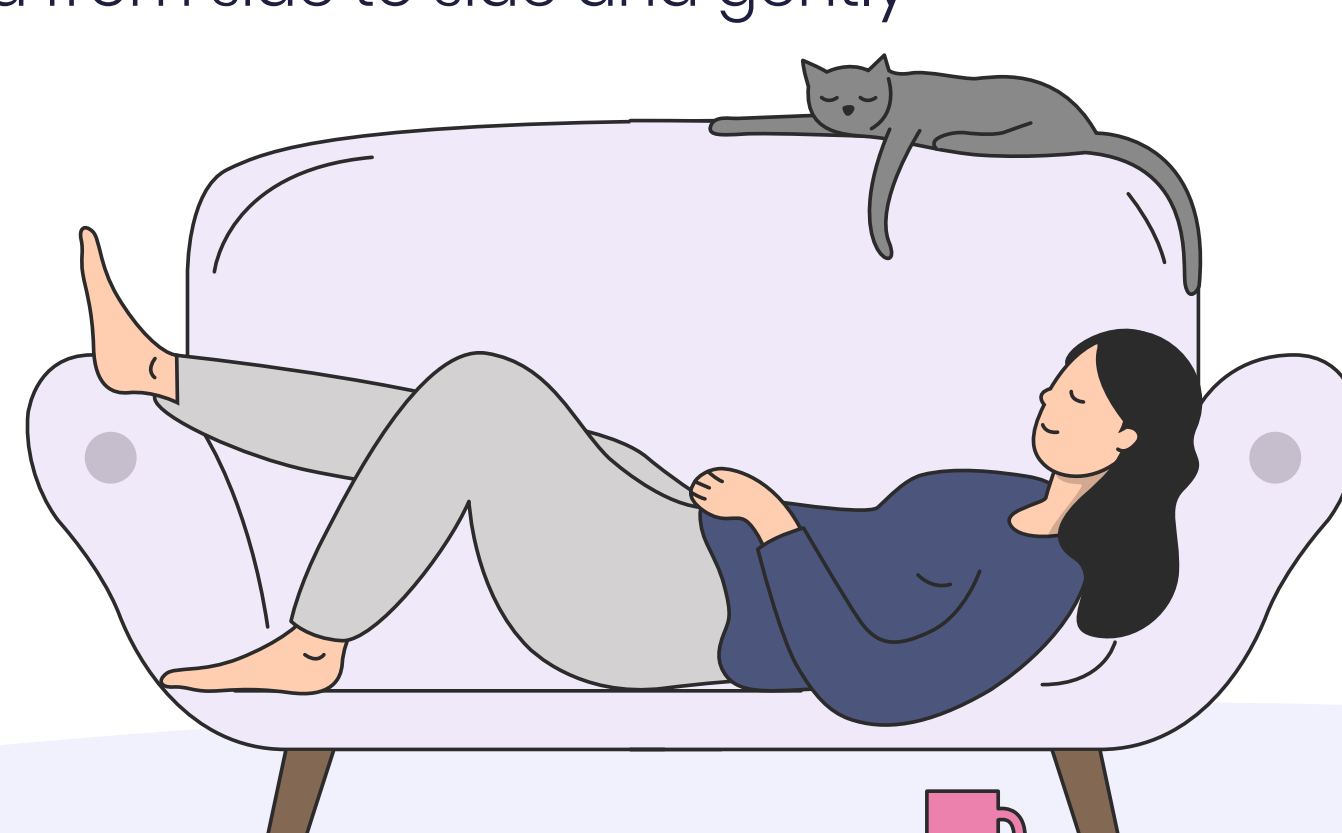


### Stay mobile

It may seem counterintuitive, but light exercise can help with back, neck and hip pain. A short walk, gentle hip and neck rotations and back stretches are beneficial, helping to release tight muscles in your body. Being in the water is also therapeutic. Even standing in a pool and moving in water can work wonders, helping boost strength and flexibility without straining your joints.

### Adjust your lifestyle

Among the fundamental causes of back, hip and neck problems are overuse and injury resulting from how you go about your daily life. You may need to adjust your work environment and lifestyle to give your body the best chance to resolve such problems. If you have a desk job, get up every 30 minutes to move your body. Sway your hips, tilt your head from side to side and gently stretch your back. You could even try to work while standing. If your pain is a strain injury from working out then make sure to rest. Swerve the gym for a while, or adjust your fitness programme to give your over-worked muscles a chance to heal.



### Hot and cold packs

Generally speaking, an ice pack will help with pulled muscles and sprains. Apply the ice pack for 10 to 15 minutes and repeat several times a day for up to three days. Longer-term aches sometimes respond well to heat treatments, which speed up recovery by increasing blood flow to the muscles. Relax in a hot bath to soothe sore ligaments. You can also try more localised treatment by placing a hot water bottle on your back, neck, or against your hip. Why not make your own heat pack? Simply microwave a cloth bag filled with uncooked rice, and voilà.

### Massage and other forms of therapy

Home therapies are excellent, but your body sometimes needs a massage or even more specialised treatment. An osteopath can treat pain by gently manipulating the muscles, joints and ligaments. A chiropractor's primary therapy is to realign your body through manipulation. They really can pop your joints back into place.



## Contact us

If you're experiencing persistent joint pain, it's always best to seek medical advice. If you're experiencing mental health issues resulting from your hips, neck, or back problems the Validium team is always here to help. Contact one of our experienced counsellors through your employer today.