

Training your team: Muscle, joint and back pains exercise

Muscle, joint and back pains are among the most common conditions seen in pharmacy. Back pain is the most common musculoskeletal pain, affecting around one in three adults per month.^{1,2}

As a team, role play how you would manage the following customers. Have your team/team member play their usual role, while you take the part of the customer.

Customer 1: A 55-year-old man:

“I’ve got a bad back, what would you recommend. Plus I also need some indigestion tablets, I’ve run out.”



Customer profile

- These are two separate complaints. Chest pain that accompanies back pain is a red flag symptom²
- He has had back pain for a couple of days but no other symptoms
- He is not taking any other medication.

More information on symptoms that require referral are in the understanding muscle, joint and back pains module.

What lifestyle advice was offered?

- The customer should be encouraged to continue with normal activities and keep moving³
- Manipulation (e.g. osteopathy), and losing weight can also help.^{3,4}

More information is available in the managing muscle, joint and back pains module.

What treatment was suggested?

- Oral NSAIDs are recommended as first-line low back pain treatments in NICE guidelines³
- Paracetamol is not recommended for use on its own in NICE guidelines.³

Was format considered?

- Customers with low back pain may seek lasting relief so a longer-lasting analgesic may be of benefit.
- Heat patches can be also be recommended as a supplementary option.



Customer 2: A 47-year old man:

“I’ve got sciatic pain down the back of my left leg.”



Customer profile

- He has had the pain for a couple of days
- He has had sciatica before, but this time it is keeping him awake at night
- He is not taking any other medication.

Did your team member correctly identify that this customer required referral to you (sciatic pain that disrupts sleep is a red flag symptom)?⁵ For sciatica that does not require referral, your team member can make the same treatment recommendations as for low back pain.⁵

More information is available in the understanding muscle, joint and back pains module.



Customer 3: A 28-year-old woman:

“I twisted my ankle yesterday.”



Customer profile

- She has a painful joint, that is tender and swollen and she can move it and bear weight
- Her pain has improved since yesterday.
- She has been using a rubefacient to ‘help with the swelling’

Was this correctly identified as a sprain that could be treated OTC? If not, more information on muscle, joint and back pains is available via a downloadable summary sheet.

What treatment was suggested?

- Topical NSAIDs or paracetamol are first-line choices for sprains or strains?⁶
- Oral NSAIDs are not recommended for the first 48 hours⁶
- The British National Formulary advises that there is little evidence that topical rubefacients are effective in musculoskeletal pains.⁷



Was format considered?

- Oral or topical formats can be used as first-line choices, so treatment should be based on customer preference.

What lifestyle advice was offered?

- Customers should recommend PRICE measures and avoid HARM measures in the first 48-72 hours after injury.⁶

More information is available in the managing muscle, joint and back pains module.



References

1. Jordan KP, et al. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders 2010, 11:144. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2903510/pdf/1471-2474-11-144.pdf>
2. NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Low back pain. April 2017. Accessed March 18. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/back-pain-low-without-radiculopathy>
3. NICE. Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management. Guideline NG59. November 2016. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59>
4. NHS Choices. Back pain. Accessed March 18. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Back-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
5. NICE Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Sciatica. February 2017. Accessed March 18. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/sciatica-lumbar-radiculopathy>
6. NICE. Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Sprains and strains. March 2016. Accessed March 18. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/sprains-and-strains>
7. British National Formulary. Soft tissue disorders. July 2017. Accessed March 18. <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summary/soft-tissue-disorders.html>

Essential information:

NUROFEN JOINT & BACK PAIN RELIEF 200MG SOFT CAPSULES: 200mg ibuprofen (GSL) INDICATIONS: For the relief of rheumatic or muscular pain, backache, neuralgia, migraine, headache, dental pain, dysmenorrhoea, feverishness, symptoms of colds and influenza. MA holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare Ltd, SL1 3UH. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications and method of use can be found at: www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/31280.

NUROFEN JOINT & BACK PAIN RELIEF MAX STRENGTH 10% GEL: Contains Ibuprofen 10% w/w. Indications: backache, rheumatic pain, muscular aches, pains or swellings such as sprains, strains and sports injuries. Legal Category: GSL. MA Holder: Mercury Pharma Group Ltd., EC4N 7BL. Distributed by Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd. MRRP: 40g: £6.99. Information about these products, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/2969

Nurofen Muscle & Back Pain Relief Heat Patches are a medical device.

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard. Adverse events should also be reported to Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd on: 0333 200 5345