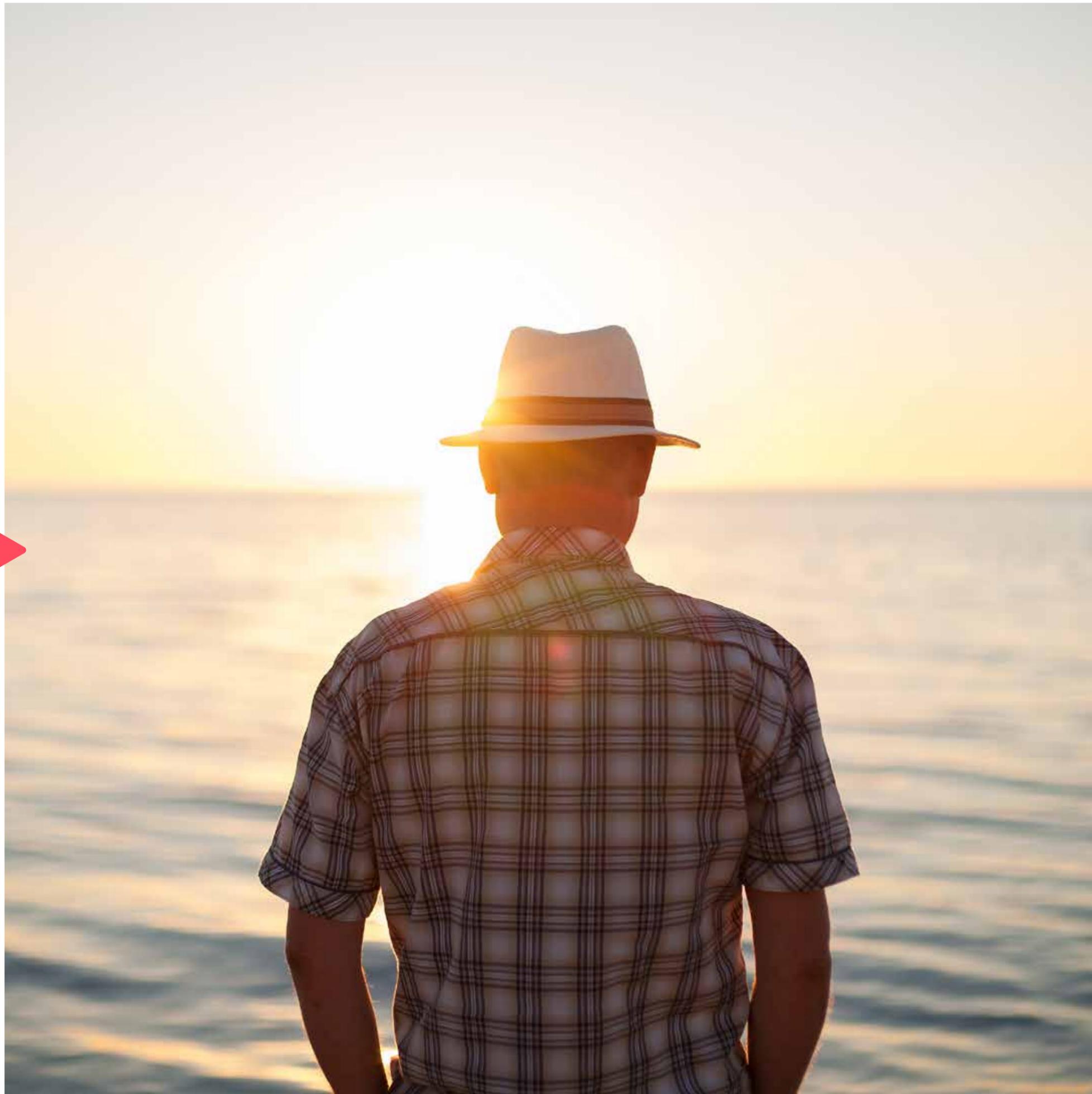




**LIVING WITH
BACK
PAIN?**

HOW TO SLEEP
BETTER AND
GET ON WITH
YOUR LIFE.



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IF YOU HAVE BACK PAIN, YOU'RE NOT ALONE

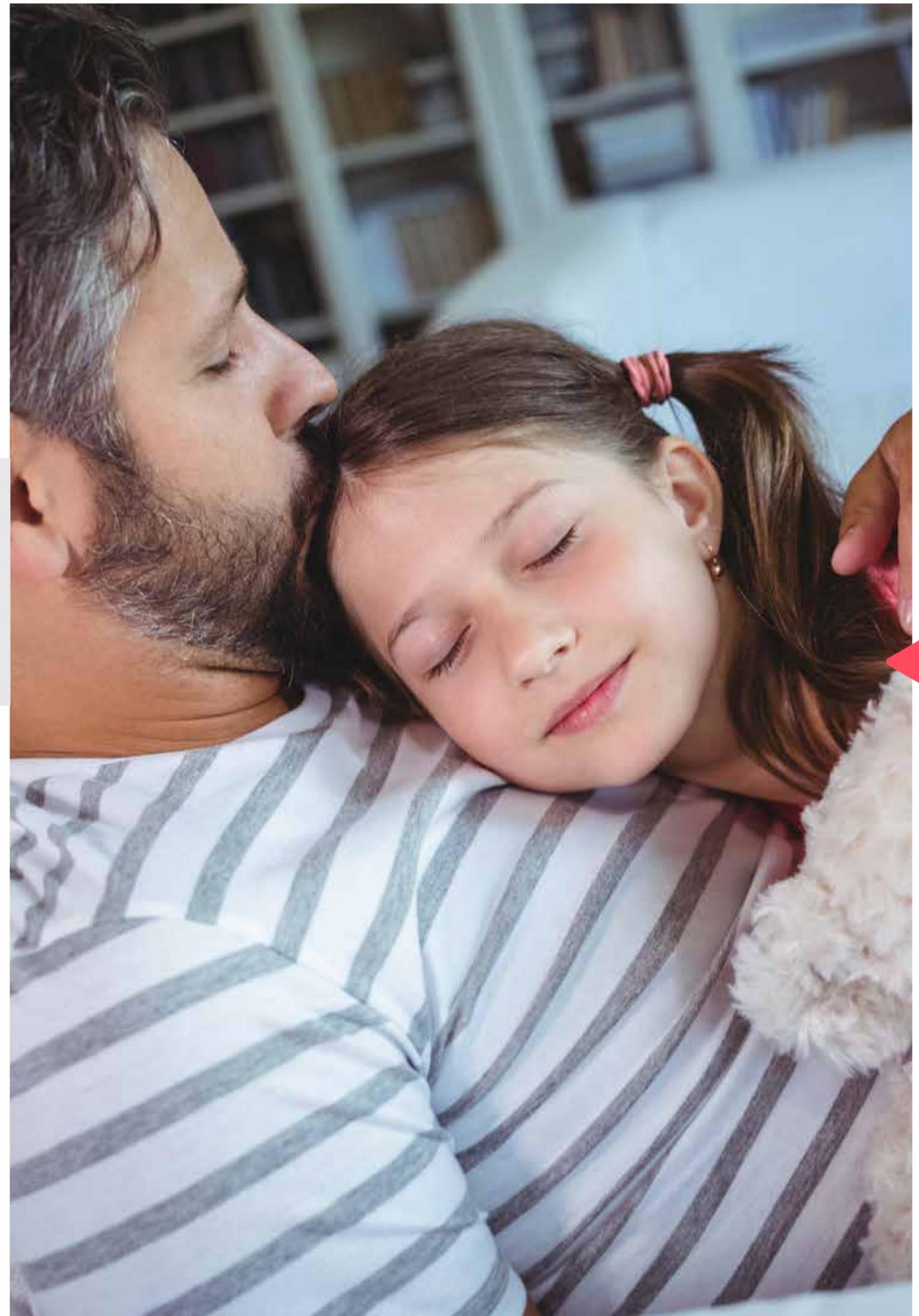
Back pain is very common. Did you know that around 4 out of 5 people will suffer from back pain at some point in their life? And a whopping 50% of adults will suffer from some kind of back pain in any given year.

If you're one of these statistics already, you know what a struggle it can be. Back pain can impact all aspects of your daily life – exercise, playing with your children, work performance and the ability to get a good night's sleep. When you're already juggling the pressures and demands of everyday life, back pain can really get in the way of enjoying your life.

And for many, it's not just a fleeting occurrence. Back pain may flare up regularly, or you may have on-going low level pain that constantly holds you back.

In this guide, our aim is to help you to better understand your back and the causes of your pain. But most importantly, we provide practical tips to help you relieve your pain, sleep better – and get on with your life!

Disclaimer: All information provided in this booklet is intended as a guide only and is not a substitute for medical advice. In particular it is not designed for use by people with a recent back injury, serious pain or underlying disease. If in doubt please see your health professional.





UNDERSTANDING YOUR BACK PAIN

The first step towards managing your back pain better is understanding what is actually causing it.

Fortunately, for most people, back pain is not the result of a significant injury or disease. So it can be treated, even prevented in the future, by making simple changes to your diet, exercise routine, posture, core strength and your mattress.

In this section we explain some simple facts about the anatomy of our backs, explore the different kinds of back pain, as well as its common causes, to help you better understand what's going on with your back.

IMPORTANT:

There's a lot you can do to manage back pain yourself, but if you have any of these symptoms, please see your doctor urgently:

- *Difficulty walking*
- *Numbness, pins and needles, or weakness in both legs*
- *Numbness in the groin or anal area*
- *Loss of bladder or bowel control*

YOUR BACK IS AMAZING

Before we focus on back pain, we should stop and marvel at our spine and back anatomy. Your back is a remarkable combination of strong bones, flexible ligaments and tendons, large muscles and highly sensitive nerves. It is designed to be incredibly strong, protecting the highly sensitive nerve roots, yet highly flexible, providing for mobility on many different planes.

We often take our amazing backs for granted in our everyday lives - until something goes wrong.

When we experience back pain, we're driven to know what's wrong and what it will take to relieve the pain and prevent it recurring. In this section, we go back to school and explain some anatomy basics, so you can understand what and how things can go wrong.



KNOW YOUR BACK

THE CERVICAL SPINE (NECK)

The neck supports the weight of the head and protects the nerves that come from the brain to the rest of the body.

Most acute neck pain is caused by a muscle, ligament or tendon strain and will usually heal with time and non-surgical treatments.

THE THORACIC SPINE (UPPER BACK)

The thoracic spine is basically a strong cage and it is designed to protect the vital organs of the heart and lungs.

The upper back is not designed for motion, and subsequently, injuries to the thoracic spine are rare. However, irritation of the large back and shoulder muscles or joint dysfunction in the upper back can produce very noticeable back pain.

THE LUMBAR SPINE (LOWER BACK)

The lower back has a lot more motion than the thoracic spine and also carries all the weight of the torso, making it the most frequently injured area of the spine.

The vast majority of episodes of lower back pain are caused by muscle strain. The good news is that soft tissues have a good blood supply, which brings nutrients to the injured area, helps the healing process and often provides effective relief.

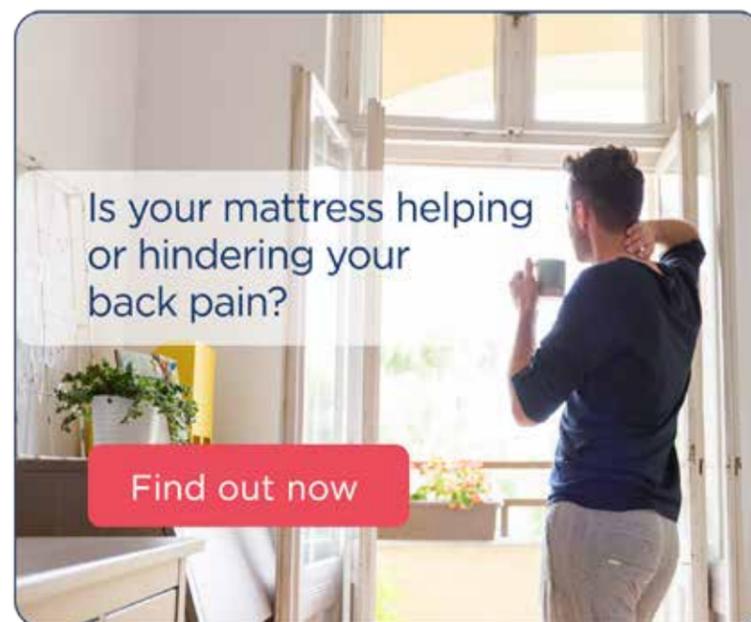
THE SACRAL REGION (BOTTOM OF THE SPINE)

The sacrum is connected to part of the pelvis. The coccyx - or the tailbone - is in the sacral region at the very bottom of the spine. Pain in these areas is more common in women than men.



WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN?

One of the challenges in diagnosing back pain is that there are many different parts of the spine that can produce back pain, such as irritation to the large nerve roots that run down the legs and arms, irritation to small nerves inside the spine, strains to the large back muscles, as well as any injury to the disc, bones, joints or ligaments in the spine. Often, these different causes will all produce similar feelings of pain.



The vast majority of back pain is mechanical in nature, meaning that there is a disruption in the way the spine, muscle, intervertebral discs, and nerves fit together and move. And in 80-90% of cases it affects the lower back. Some examples of mechanical causes of low back pain include:

- **Sprains and strains**
- **Intervertebral disc degeneration**
- **Herniated or ruptured discs**
- **Radiculopathy** (a condition caused by compression, inflammation and/or injury to a spinal nerve root)
- **Sciatica** (compression of the large nerve that travels through the buttocks and extends down the back of the leg)
- **Spondylolisthesis** (a vertebra of the lower spine slips out of place, pinching the nerves)
- **A traumatic injury**
- **Spinal stenosis** (narrowing of the spinal column that puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves)

- **Skeletal irregularities** (e.g. scoliosis, lordosis and other congenital anomalies of the spine).

The good news is that most mechanical back pain is short term and lasts from only a few days to a few weeks. It tends to resolve on its own with self-care and usually there is no lasting loss of function.

Here's a guide to typical back injury recovery times:

- Acute back pain - 1 to 4 weeks
- Subacute back pain is defined as pain that lasts between 4 to 12 weeks.
- Chronic back pain is defined as pain that persists for 12 weeks or longer, even after an initial injury or underlying cause of acute low back pain has been treated.

Fortunately, the treatment and prevention for many of the mechanical issues for back pain are the same.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO BACK PAIN

Most people don't realise that the most common types of back pain often don't have just one root cause. Instead, there are often a number of contributing factors which when combined, can 'push your back over the edge' or aggravate underlying existing issues.

Some of these factors include:

- Sitting for long periods at a time (without taking a break)
- Poor posture
- Lifting objects that are too heavy
- Poor core muscle strength
- Feeling stressed or anxious
- Smoking
- Being pregnant
- Not getting the recommended 30 minutes of exercise a day
- Being overweight
- Slipping or falling.

LOOKING AFTER YOUR BACK AS YOU AGE

Unfortunately, as we age our backs are often not quite as resilient as we'd hope for.

In many cases, back pain is associated with general degeneration of the spine associated with normal wear and tear (spondylosis), that occurs in the joints, discs, and bones of the spine as we get older.

It's so important to take care of your back and your general health as the years go by. Having the right supportive mattress is a great place to start.

We'll talk more about this in the following sections.



BACK PAIN AND SLEEP

Your spine carries the weight of your body all day, and night time is the only chance where it can relax and the bones, discs, nerves and muscles have 8 hours to rest, repair and rejuvenate. Your mattress is the most important factor in supporting your back during sleep.

Now that you better understand the different types of back pain and their causes and symptoms, you can focus on identifying and relieving your own back pain. We cover this in our next section.

THE 7 MOST IMPORTANT THINGS YOU CAN DO TO RELIEVE BACK PAIN AND STOP IT FROM COMING BACK



No one wants to have their lifestyle cramped by back pain or injury. It hurts. It's stressful. And it can be costly - in many ways.

Prolonged back pain doesn't just affect you physically - if it really persists, it can lead to emotional issues such as mood swings, anxiety, irritability, frustration and depression.

It's natural to want to get back to your normal self as soon as possible - so in this section, we share some tips and advice on what you can do to help improve your quality of life.

TIP #1

KEEP MOVING AND WHEN YOU'RE READY, START REGULAR EXERCISE

Many people fear that excess movement and activity (including work) will only make their injury worse and prolong their recovery. But research says, in most cases, staying active can actually help reduce your pain, strengthen muscles and shorten your healing time.

In the case of minor back pain, the sooner you get back to being active the better. Building strength in your back and core is very important - and regular exercise such as walking, swimming and dancing is a great place to start.

Once your back pain is under control you should start a regular exercise program. But be careful as it's better to take your time and build your strength, fitness and flexibility bit by bit, than to try and train like a professional athlete from day one and end up reinjuring yourself. Your back and body will thank you in the long run.

TIP #2

MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE

Maintaining good posture is crucial to reducing stress on parts of the back that are causing back pain, and to reducing general wear and tear on your back in the future.

Being mindful of posture is harder than ever - we are now living with digital technology at our fingertips, and naturally it's a big part of our everyday lives - from how we work, communicate, find information to how we entertain ourselves.

While digital technology and the internet has helped make the world much more connected, it's also driven a more inactive lifestyle. Because of this, the number of us seeking help for neck and back pain has risen drastically in the last few years.

Find out more about what the posture experts recommend to prevent back pain.

[Download our Posture Checklist](#)



TIP #3

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET AND WEIGHT

Ever heard the saying “you are what you eat”? Didn’t think it would apply to your back?

To reduce back pain, it is important to maintain proper nutrition and diet in order to prevent excessive weight gain. Carrying extra weight increases the risk of back pain, joint pain and muscle strain.

Research shows that being overweight increases the likelihood of experiencing back problems than those at a healthy weight. This is especially true if you carry extra weight around your midsection because the extra weight pulls the pelvis forward and strains the back.

In addition to muscle strain, spinal structures such as the discs can be negatively impacted by carrying extra weight. Significant excess weight may also lead to sciatica and back pain from a herniated disc or from a pinched nerve if the discs have been damaged from compensating for the extra weight.

It is also valuable to note that a diet with sufficient daily intake of calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D helps to promote new bone growth.

TIP #4

STRETCH REGULARLY

Almost all of us can benefit from stretching the soft tissues (muscles, ligaments and tendons) in our back, legs, buttocks and around the spine.

But stretching is especially important if you’re experiencing ongoing back pain. Research shows that incorporating stretching exercises into your daily routine can be effective in promoting long-term relief from chronic back pain.

Here are a few simple stretches you can get started on today:

Back flexion. Lie on your back and pull both knees to the chest, at the same time, flex your head forward until a comfortable stretch is felt in a balled-up position.

Lying knee twist. This movement will stretch your paraspinal muscles as well as strengthen your abdominal muscles. Lie on your back with legs extended straight out. Bend the right knee up and cross it over the left side of your body.

Hold in a position that allows you to feel a gentle stretch though the back muscles for 20 seconds. Tighten your core muscles and rotate back to centre. Repeat three times on each side.

Hamstring stretch. Lie on your back and raise your left leg as high as you can, keeping your pelvis flat on the mattress. Hold your thigh and move your leg, slowly towards your head. Flex your foot to stretch your calf. Hold the position for 30 seconds and then switch sides.

Hip and lower back stretch. Lie on your back and bend both knees. Hold on to the balls of your feet and gently pull your knees toward the floor beside your chest using your arms. Relax your head and shoulders for 30 seconds.

Slipped discs are most likely to occur within 30 to 60 minutes after we wake up. So it is extremely important to stretch first thing in the morning (you can even do most of these stretches from bed!).



TIP #5

STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE

The average person does not do enough back and abdominal exercise, either in everyday activities or even in exercise sessions. This is unfortunate, because strong back and abdominal muscles can help heal most types of back pain, especially the most common form of back pain caused by soft tissue injury or back muscle strain.

Consequently, exercises that strengthen these core muscles should be a part of a balanced back/abdominal exercise programme. Back muscles and abdominal muscles tend to weaken with age unless specifically exercised.

It is ideal to strengthen the muscles that support the spine, which are grouped in three categories:

- **Extensors** (back and gluteal muscles). These muscles are used to straighten the back (stand), lift and extend, and abduct the hip (move the thigh away from the body).
- **Flexors** (abdominal and iliopsoas muscles). These muscles are used to bend and support the spine from the front. The flexors also control the arch of the lumbar (lower) spine, and flex the hip.

- **Obliques or Rotators** (paraspinal (side) muscles). These muscles are used to stabilise the spine when upright. The obliques also rotate the spine and help maintain proper posture and spinal curvature.

TIP #6

USE PROPER TECHNIQUE WHEN YOU'RE LIFTING OR TWISTING

The majority of episodes of acute back pain are caused by damage to the muscles and/or ligaments in the back. Back pain from muscle strain is usually caused by any type of movement that puts undue stress on the back. Frequent causes include lifting a heavy object, lifting while twisting, or a sudden movement or fall.

Sports injuries are a frequent cause of a pulled back muscle, especially with sports that involve twisting (such as golf), or any types of sudden impact or jarring motions.

While a muscle strain doesn't sound like a serious injury, the resulting back pain can be surprisingly severe and is the cause of many emergency room visits each year. When the muscles or ligaments in the back are strained or torn, the area around the muscles

will usually become inflamed. The inflammation leads to back spasm, and this can cause both severe lower back pain and difficulty moving.

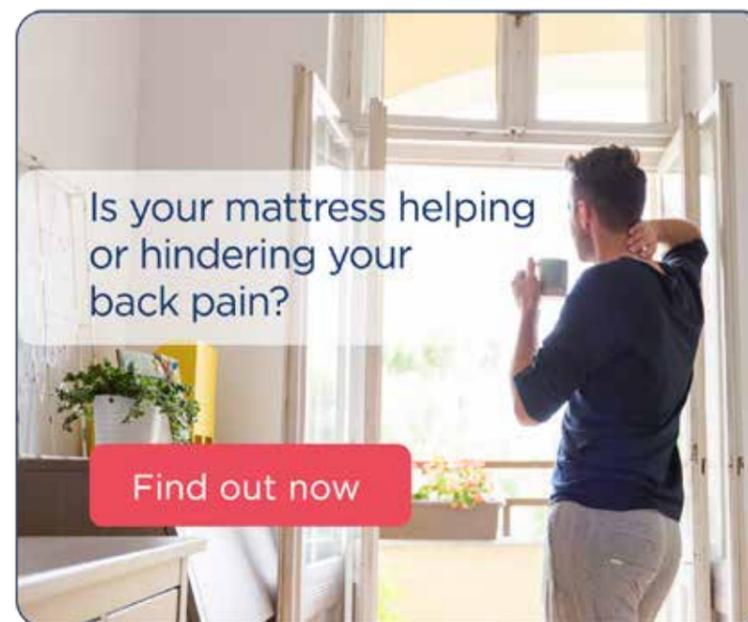
TIP #7

CHECK HOW YOU'RE SLEEPING

Being mindful of your sleep position and having a good, supportive mattress should allow you to wake up feeling well-rested and free of pain.

Those eight hours of sleep per night are crucial in restoring our back muscles, bones, ligaments and discs.

Which brings us to the next chapter, how to sleep better and get on with your life.



HOW TO SLEEP BETTER AND GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE

One of the main problems experienced by sufferers of lower back pain is an inability to get a good night's sleep. Around two-thirds of people experiencing lower back pain suffer from disrupted sleep. Disrupted sleep will then increase your chronic back pain problem. A vicious cycle develops where your back pain wakes you up, you then can't sleep, which worsens your pain.

A comfortable, supportive mattress is critical in relieving back pain by adjusting to your natural spinal alignment and supporting the curves of your spine at the neck, mid and lower back.

WHY DOES MY BACK HURT OR GET WORSE WHEN SLEEPING?

When the spine is outside of its natural position the brain activates muscles to align it back into its natural position.

When sleeping on a mattress that doesn't provide sufficient support for your spine's natural alignment, your core muscles take over to provide the additional support. Over eight hours these muscles tire and can spasm,

causing back pain. This can have one of two negative effects on your back:

1. Waking regularly in pain which prevents your body and back from getting the restorative sleep it needs to heal and regenerate
2. Fatigue of the muscles, leading to misalignment and additional stress on your back that worsens the already underlying issue.

HOW SLEEP POSITIONS AFFECT YOUR BACK

Whether it's in your neck, back, or joints, pain affects how much sleep you get each night. While the right mattress is extremely important for postural alignment, comfort and whole body support, the position in which you sleep plays a large part in how well you're resting, as well as healing your back.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT COMMON SLEEPING POSITIONS AND HOW THEY AFFECT YOUR SPINE.

Sleeping on your front. When you sleep on your stomach, your back flexes unnaturally and strains the ligaments around your spine – making it difficult to maintain a neutral sleeping position. If this is the only way you can sleep comfortably, try placing a pillow underneath your chest to help reduce the strain on your back.

Sleeping on your side. When you sleep on your side, oftentimes your body is twisted so that your legs can rest side-by-side on the mattress, instead of on top of each other. This strains your

spine – instead, lie on your side and put a slight bend in your knees, stacking your hips in a straight line and place a firm pillow between your knees so your legs are propped about hip-width apart. Sleeping with extra padding takes practice, and it may feel unnatural at first – however your body will thank you, as the pain you experience in the night will drastically reduce.

Sleeping on your back. This is the easiest sleeping position to ensure you keep your head, neck and back aligned in a neutral position throughout the night. To maintain a normal curve in your lower back, place a pillow underneath your knees. You can also try placing a small rolled towel or a pillow under the small of your back for additional support.



MAXIMUM SPINAL SUPPORT

It's essential that when lying down your body lays flat with continuous support and full contact from the surface in a uniform manner, distributing the body weight to alleviate stress on the spine. This will help to maintain proper posture and ensure the spine stays straight so that your neck, shoulders, lower, middle and upper back stay healthy.

If there are gaps between your body and the surface of the top cover, you're not getting the full support that you need and will eventually end up with joint pain in the morning.

THE ROLE OF A GOOD MATTRESS

A good mattress is so important in achieving good back health. Finding the right mattress involves getting both the right support, as well as comfort to facilitate good sleep. The wrong mattress won't be able to provide you with the right support for your body and will reinforce poor sleeping posture, strain muscles and won't keep your spine properly aligned – all of which can cause or worsen back pain.

Also, if a mattress doesn't meet your personal preferences, then your comfort is sacrificed, resulting in interrupted sleep that leaves you feeling tired and achy in the mornings.

Tip: Older mattresses will eventually lose their support, so consider replacing your mattress every 8 to 10 years.

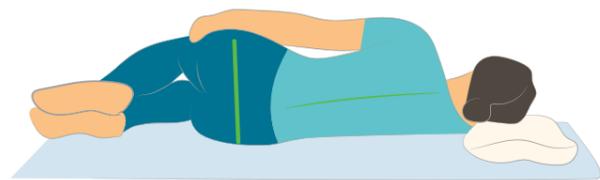
Here are some practical guidelines to help choose the best mattress to meet your sleep support and comfort needs.

Honouring your personal preferences.

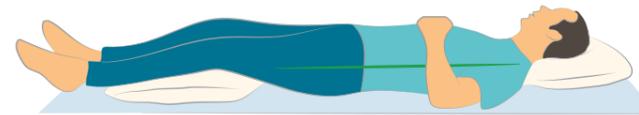
There's no one "miracle mattress" that will be suitable for every single person with back pain. Any mattress that will help you sleep without pain, discomfort or interruption will be the best mattress for you. Choose a mattress that meets your personal criteria for comfort and support and start getting a good night's sleep!

Getting the correct support. A good bed and mattress will gently support your whole body and keep your spine in a neutral position – no matter if you're lying on your back, front or side. Pay attention to your pressure points when choosing a new bed (these will be your hips, shoulders and lower back - the heaviest parts of your body).

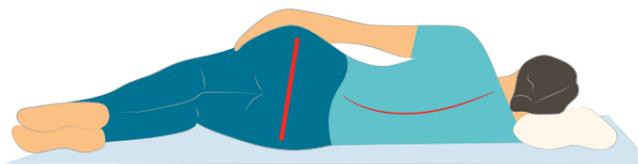
Try before you buy. Make sure you try several mattresses before you buy. Lie down in your preferred sleeping position, check your spine is in line and rest for 10 minutes. This will give a good guide to the comfort and support the mattress gives you.



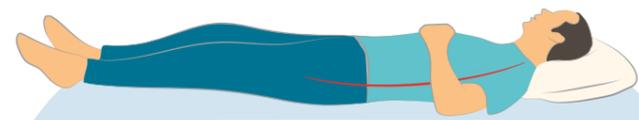
Correct



Correct



Incorrect

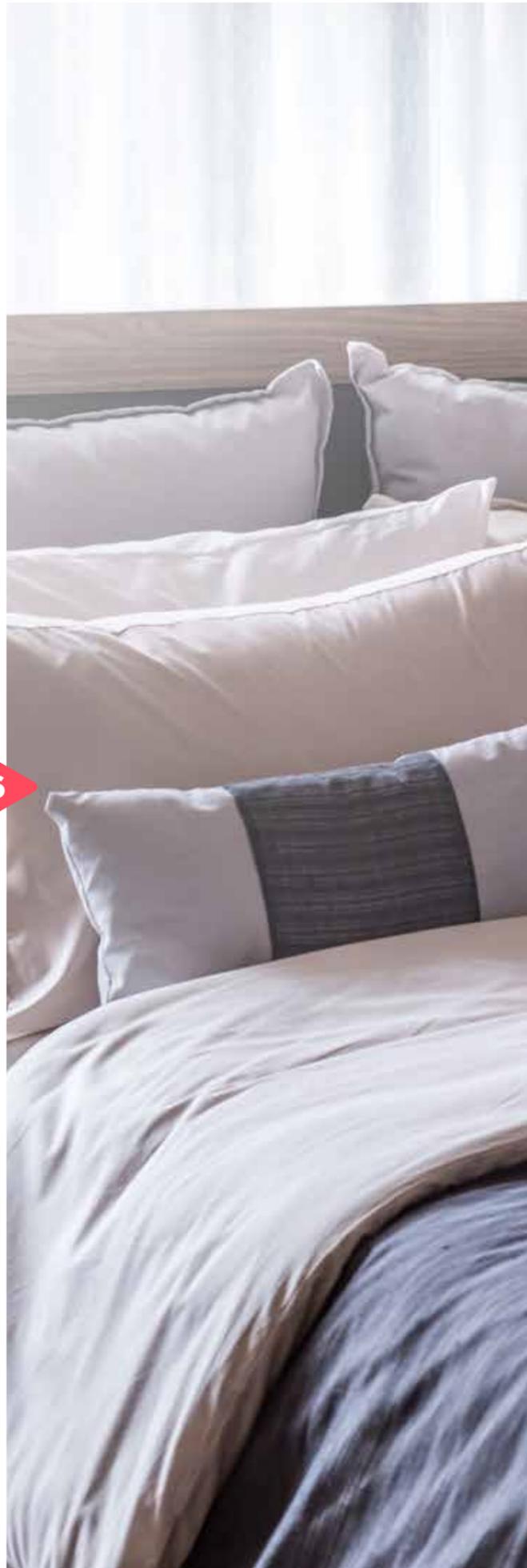


Incorrect

To find the right core support and comfort layer for you check out our **Mattress Selector**

[Try our mattress selector now](#)





Getting what you pay for. When it comes to good back health – don't cut corners! No bed will last forever, but when you invest in one that is made of high quality materials and can offer you the back support you need, you'll be sure to get your money's worth. A \$2000 dollar mattress will cost 55c per night over 10 years or 28c each if with a partner.

Avoiding partner disturbance. No matter how similar we are to another person, our sleeping patterns will never be exactly the same. Interrupted sleep from a partner's movements is the biggest problem for couples who share a bed. Find a mattress and bed foundation that minimises partner disturbance.

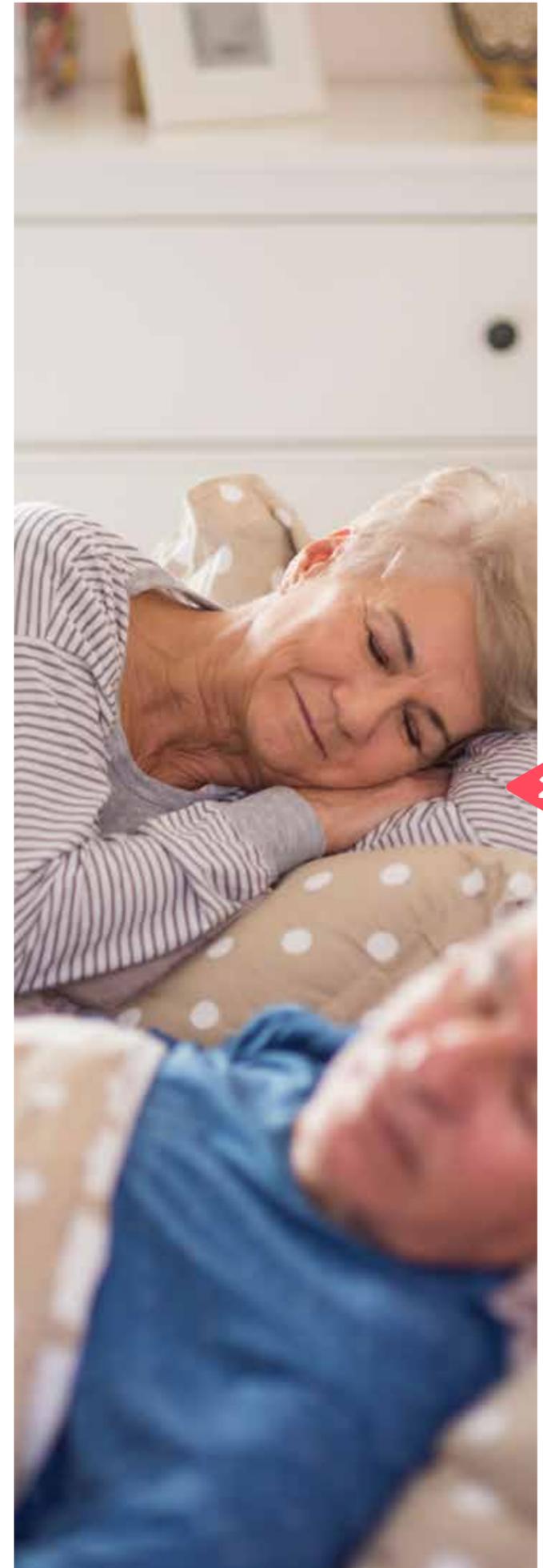
LIGHTS OUT TIME

Now that you've read this guide, we hope you feel more confident about the cause of your back pain, and you're now armed with practical tips you can put into practice to start alleviating some of those aches and pains.

As any back pain sufferer will know, living with constant and ongoing pain can be debilitating – but it doesn't have to be. While there are many causes for back pain, sleeping on the wrong mattress is one of the main reasons people are waking up stiff and sore.

The way you sleep and the quality and age of your mattress, are extremely important factors in supporting anyone with back pain to have a good night's sleep. A mattress that isn't perfectly suited to your body will reinforce poor sleeping posture resulting in strained muscles and unnatural spinal alignment throughout the night, and can actually make your back pain worse.

Maybe now is the time to start examining your sleeping habits as well as your mattress?

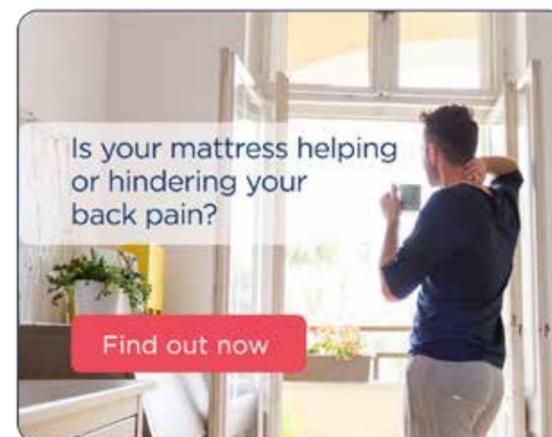


THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ OUR GUIDE.

SleepMaker®

We hope this guide helped you to better understand your back and the causes of your pain.

Enjoy your sleep, enjoy your life!



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Disclaimer: This guide is intended solely for information purposes and is not to be construed. It is not designed for use by people with a recent, serious back injury or underlying disease. If you're suffering from this type of injury or are unsure, please seek advice from a health professional.



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