



# 10 TIPS FOR BACK PAIN RECOVERY

*By Andre De Oliveira – Physiotherapist*

# DRINK PLENTY OF WATER (AND AVOID ALCOHOL)

It's a simple thing to do and helps to reduce pain in many people who have back pain. Dehydration can cause pain in any area of the body. Alcohol can increase inflammation and make pain worse so it is best avoided if you are in pain. So keep a water bottle close-by throughout the day



## USE HEAT

In my experience, heat is often really helpful for back pain. This is because it boosts circulation to the area and relaxes tight and sore muscles. There is good research evidence for using heat for pain relief, so you are likely to find this helpful.

I recommend a heat pad, wheat bag or hot water bottle, which provide deeper heat than the over-the-counter creams.

Some people do find ice helpful, so a wrapped up ice pack applied for 5 minutes can also be worth trying.



# TRY OTHER FORMS OF PAIN RELIEF BEFORE A PILL

**Current guidelines** recommend choosing non-pharmacological treatments before taking medication. If other forms of pain relief haven't had an impact then taking some pain relief for a few days can help to get you mobile again. This is particularly important if you are not sleeping well, so your body can go through the vital restoration and anti-inflammatory processes it needs whilst you are sleeping.



# VARY YOUR POSITION

Movement is very important for back pain relief. Prolonged bed rest is not helpful and no longer recommended as it can cause pain to continue. Aim to change your position at least every half an hour.



# BE KIND AND TREAT YOURSELF

Being in pain can be so tough, so this is the time to really indulge and treat yourself, in whatever way which you find is best to cheer yourself up (and is healthy!).

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## FIND YOUR 'POSITIONS OF EASE'

Take note of the positions that you feel most comfortable in and build more of these positions into your day.

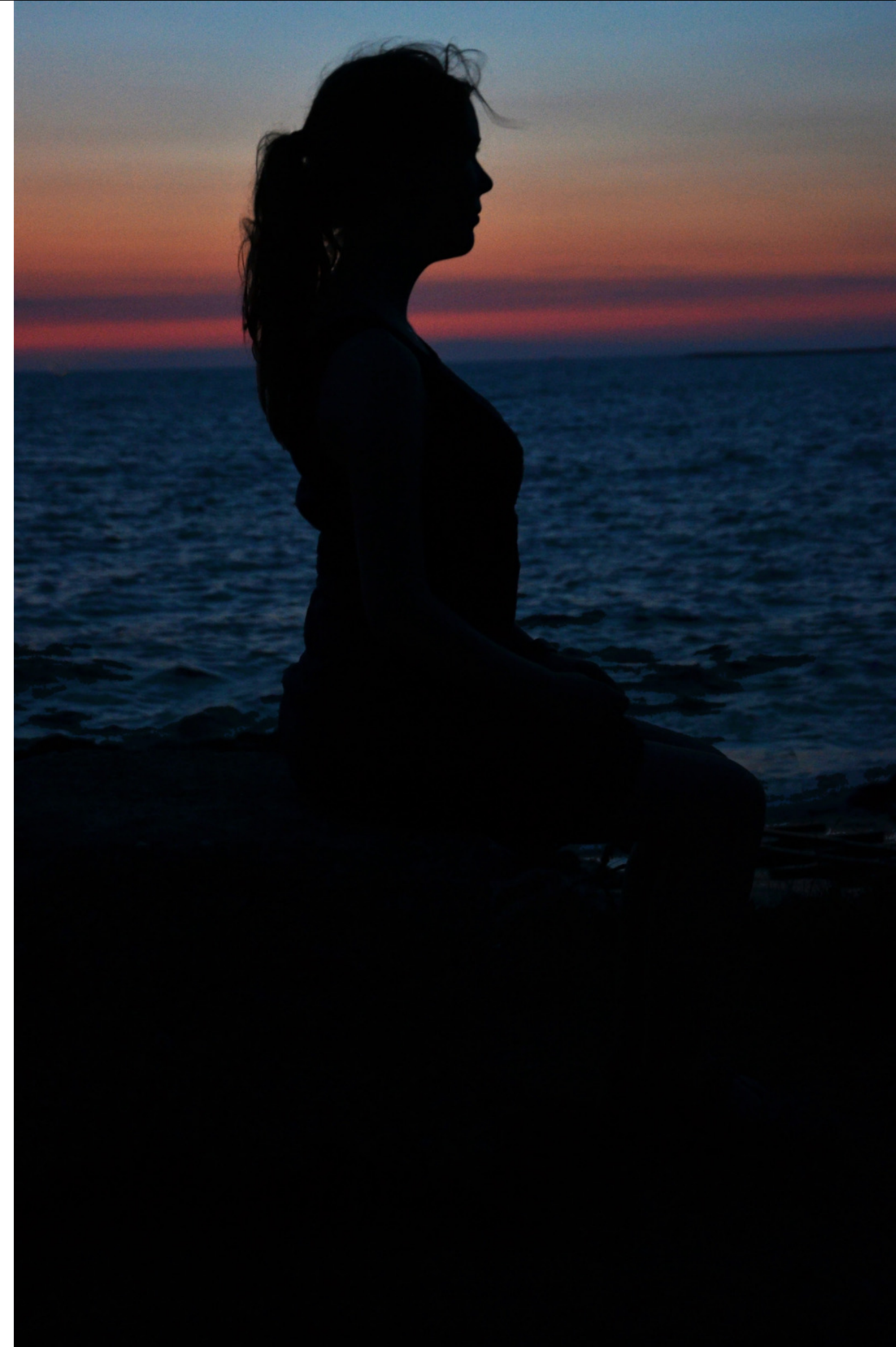
At night, experiment with pillows to discover how you are most comfortable when lying down. This could be by placing several pillows under your legs if you are lying on your back. If you are lying on your side, try placing your top leg on several pillows and having a pillow on either side of your back.

A physiotherapist can help with this.



# WATCH YOUR INNER DIALOGUE

People in pain can be really hard on themselves and this makes the experience of pain worse. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to help people with back pain, so this is certainly worth doing. Alternatives to meditation are: doing a guided relaxation, writing any concerns down, or distracting yourself by watching something very engaging.



# IDENTIFY HELPFUL EXERCISES

There is really good evidence that exercise is helpful for people with back pain. You need to build in movements gently and gradually, increasing the range of movement and intensity of the exercise, ensuring they do not provoke pains. It can be hard to know which movements will work so do get professional advice on this.



# IDENTIFY WHAT CAUSED THE PAIN TO START

This is often the key to working out how to recover fully and prevent the problem recurring. There may have been an incident when the pain started, but there is usually a combination of several factors prior to this which made it more likely for the pain to start, for example: a recent change in activity/ sport / job, poor sleep, stressful circumstances.

Talk this through with a trusted person or a health professional.



# SEE A PHYSIOTHERAPIST

A physiotherapist can be so helpful when you have back pain. Physiotherapists may do a combination of different evidence-based treatments which could include: hands on mobilising treatments of the spine, acupuncture, postural and movement analysis to determine a bespoke series of exercises to enable your recovery.





# WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

- If the pain is severely affecting your sleep or mood and over the counter pain medication does not help
- Pain lasting for more than 10 days
- If you have changes in your bladder or bowel control
- Pins and needles or numbness around your genitals
- Pins and needles or numbness in your limbs which is becoming progressively worse
- If you are also feeling generally unwell
- If you had a traumatic injury to your back.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

André de Oliveira

BSc (Hons), MCSP, MHCPC

André is a chartered physiotherapist and the Director of ALO Physiotherapy Clinic on Harley Street. He specializes in treatment for back, neck and knee pain. He thrives on the strong belief that as the history of our lives becomes our biology, treating any condition holistically is the way forward for effective rehabilitation. He also has a keen interest in sports.

André is originally from Brazil where he obtained his first degree in Sport Science. His drive for achievement then led him to secure an honours degree in Physiotherapy at the University Of East London (UEL) in 1998.



He has worked at many of the leading hospitals in London, including the Royal London Hospital and Northwick Park where he has obtained extensive clinical experience in the areas of orthopaedics, elderly care, sports injuries and post-surgical care.

One of André's passions is furthering advancements within physiotherapy and as such he founded Little Nudge (software that reminds people when to take breaks, perform quick and simple exercises) which is in its final trial stages at a large medical insurers, he is also becoming increasingly involved with the physiotherapy regulatory bodies and was the first physiotherapist to bring Human Tecar Therapy technology to the UK.

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