



# Take back control

In this four-part miniseries, NICK SINFIELD tackles four of the most commonly held back pain myths that delay or even prevent rehabilitation and recovery. Nick is a chartered physiotherapist, BackCare Professional Member and Clinical Director for Spring Active.



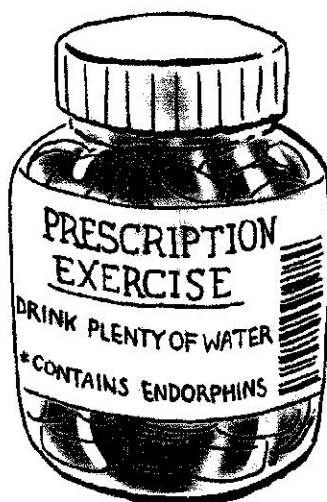
## Part 2:

**"Exercise is dangerous for me, I need to protect my back from moving" – MYTH!**

A common effect of pain is that you can become fearful of movement or believe that a certain movement will damage something. You think you are doing the right thing by protecting your back, when in fact you should be moving and doing physical activities that move the spine normally. Moving and bending consistently with a rigidly protected back will prevent your recovery, not help it! By not bending and moving correctly, this places strain on already sensitive soft tissues.

This protective muscle guarding limits the back moving as it is meant to. Your anxiety and fear of moving the back can generate altered movement and ongoing stiffness. Restoring confident fluid movement in the spine will, over time, make it less sensitive to flare ups. When starting to exercise, it may well make your back sore – it is important to be aware of this – but this soreness does not mean it is getting worse. It is similar to moving and exercising an ankle after a sprain.

Getting the rate of exercise right and gradually increasing it is the important part. Your exercise plan should be a journey of sustained commitment, not too timid, not



too aggressive in your approach and aiming to achieve a slow and steady increase in the amount of activity you can do. Ease up if you need to, but always keep moving forwards. Even if your pain and stiffness is longstanding, the structures of the spine must move in order to recover and function correctly for everyday life.

Developing an understanding of the body and visualising what is happening inside the back makes exercise and movement easier and helps to reduce the fear. Remember, your back is surrounded by many strong muscles and ligaments and these require movement.

Your muscles work

together to keep the spine balanced and in control. All the muscles around the spine play an important role in making smooth co-ordinated movement possible. If your wrist just came out of plaster after a fracture, you would be told to get it moving as soon as possible to help the healing and return the joint to normal. Compare this to your back, which is made up of lots of joints which need fluid movement, not over-protection and guarding.



**The muscles are the orchestra and our brain is the conductor**

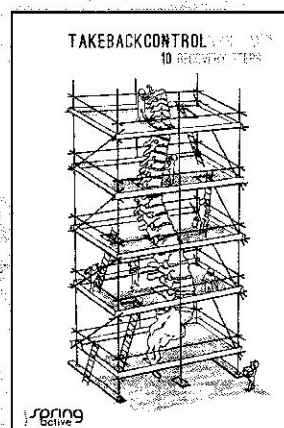
In overcoming your fear of movement or certain activities,



your own attitude makes a big difference. The more fearful or tense you become, the more difficult it is to move freely. This is where strong resilience, staying calm and clear thinking are important for recovery.

## Benefits of movement

- Reduces muscle spasm and tension
- Improves blood flow, reduces inflammation and provides nutrients to the area in pain
- Increases soft tissue mobility
- Increases confidence to complete everyday activities
- Reduces anxiety
- After 10 minutes of exercise, the brain produces "happy chemicals" that have a calming effect on nerves.



Spring Active is offering BackCare members a 15% discount on its self-management workbook *The TakeBackControl System – 10 Recovery Steps*. Enter coupon code SA28 for this discount at [www.spring-active.com/back-pain-shop](http://www.spring-active.com/back-pain-shop)