

Get rid of your health niggles today...

## Backaches

This month's team of experts explain how simple lifestyle changes and gentle exercise can make a real difference when treating back pain

### THE OSTEOPATH

**Barrie Savory, qualified osteopath**



'If you've had children, you're more likely to suffer from back pain because of the strain put on the muscles in your back and abdominals. To strengthen them, do pelvic floor exercises – the pelvic muscles are the ones you use when you stop weeing mid-flow. Pull the muscles up and in as much as you can and clench the cheeks of your bottom together. Hold for a couple of seconds, let go halfway, then let go fully. Once you've got the hang of

it, you can do it anywhere and as often as possible. Pilates is also a fantastic exercise to help alleviate back pain, but if you don't want to spend money on classes, go for a walk – it engages all your muscles, plus, it's free! If the pain gets unbearable, use a heat wrap to relax and soothe your muscles. Try the Self-heating ThermoCare Therapeutic Back Heat Wraps [£5.97 for two at chemists] which mould to the shape of your back.'

◆ **For more advice, read *The Good Back Guide* by Barrie Savory (£15, Century).**

### THE DOCTOR

**Dr Rod Hughes, Consultant Rheumatologist, St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey**



'If you have a physical job, carry out repetitive tasks or are overweight and unfit, you're more likely to get back pain. You should visit your GP if you're suffering from severe back pain – the kind that stops you sleeping, working or resting – to see whether you need a referral. Your GP can decide if you need an X-ray, whether the pain is accompanied by any worrying symptoms, such as chronic night-time pain, loss of weight or general illness and

whether osteoporosis or spondylitis is suspected. However, most back pain can be treated without hospital referral. The fitter you are, the better equipped you are to deal with back pain – healthy eating and regular exercise, like swimming, yoga or Pilates, can all help. And try taking supplements such as LitoZin Joint Health [£29.99 from litozin.co.uk], which contains high levels of a rosehip extract that has proved effective in reducing back pain without side effects.'

◆ **More info at [pilatesfoundation.com](http://pilatesfoundation.com).**

### THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

**Martin Haines is a physiotherapist and biomechanics coach**



'Sitting in front of a computer all day, driving or watching TV are why so many of us develop back problems. The pain often stems from a twisted pelvis which puts a strain on the joints in your back. Try this exercise: sit upright and cross your legs so the ankle bone of your right foot rests on the top of your left thigh. Put your left palm on top of your right knee. Push your right knee into your left hand so you're pulling your right thigh upwards. Hold for 20 secs;

repeat four times. Do the same on your other side. Wearing high heels all the time tips your pelvis forwards and puts a strain on the joints in your back, so change into flats when walking a long way. Heavy bags can damage your back, so keep swapping the shoulder or arm you use to carry it. Finally, if you have a desk job, fidget – it's good for you! Slouch, then sit upright, sit on one side of your bottom, then the other – this will stop you stiffening up.'

◆ **Find out more about biomechanics at [intelligenttrainingsystems.com](http://intelligenttrainingsystems.com).**



### Women like you

You say...



**JOANNA ROSE, 34,**

**FROM EAST SUSSEX**

'I injured my back in 2008 while on holiday. I slipped down a flight of steps and landed

on the base of my spine. It was the most painful thing I'd ever experienced, and by the time I got home I knew there was something badly wrong.

I started to see an osteopath every week: he diagnosed that my spine had been pushed out of alignment. The treatment really helped, but the pain came back when I'd been sitting in a rigid position at my desk in work. I recently found a back support called DynaSpine [£79.99, from [dynaspineinternational.com](http://dynaspineinternational.com)], which I attach to my chair and it allows me to move around without straining my back. It's pricey, but worth every penny – I definitely don't feel as stiff after a long day in the office.'