

# Back Pain

Back pain is the **number one** in First World countries when it comes to working days lost every year. Fifty percent of hospital cases in Germany in 2017 were the result of back problems.

The most **common** causes of **severe** long-term pain and **disability** in the EU are musculoskeletal **conditions** (MSC). The musculoskeletal system provides the body with support, stability, and movement. The **prevalence** of many MSC and their associated disabilities increases with aging, **obesity** and **lack** of physical activity. Whereas in the past **employment**, such as factory work, was more or less physical, today it is largely **sedentary**. Sitting is not the only problem:

**posture** and lack of muscle tone also play a role.

Male pharmacy customer: Hallo. Do you speak English?

**PTA: Hallo, yes I do. How may I help you?**

I have a really bad back ache. Do you have any painkillers that you can recommend?

**Yes, of course, but first I need to know a little about your problem. If that's okay with you?**

Sure, no problem. Go ahead.

**Where exactly do you have the pain?**

It's quite low down actually. Around the **spine** and hips.

**Ok. And does it radiate out in one or both legs?**

Now that you ask, it is a bit uncomfortable in my left leg when I walk, or have to stand.

**Have you any idea if you might have injured your back in some way?**

Not really. Why?

Back pain can be caused by any number of things such as **poor posture when sitting or standing, or lifting heavy weights incorrectly. It can also be caused simply by turning suddenly and putting stresses and strains on a certain area. It can also just be bad habits such as telephoning with the phone jammed**

**between your ear and your shoulder. This list is very long!**

I see. Well I work in an office and have to sit for very long periods. Yesterday, we had a meeting that went on for hours and I felt a bit stiff when I got up to go home. My neck was especially stiff from having to look at the PowerPoint presentation at an **awkward** angle.

**Do you have a headache? Or did you have a headache after the meeting.**

I sure did!

**You are quite tall so I think you might often have to look down at people, don't you?**

You're right there, I'm 6 foot 5 inches, that's just over 2 metres and it really doesn't help having to look down!

**As far as I can tell, your back pain is from a combination of all those things you told me about. I have a few things that I can recommend. First, there's this topical gel that you can apply to the affected area.**

What about painkillers?

**Right! Sorry, I almost forgot. I can recommend this OTC painkiller with lysine. It works quite quickly, so you should have some relief in a short time. We also have this preparation with special active ingredients to facilitate healthy nerves. It usually takes a while to take effect, but it is very good.**

Good I'll try that.

**You might also consider talking to a physio who can recommend exercises to help your back. It certainly helped me when I had a problem like yours last year!**

That's a good idea! I'll definitely do that, thank you. Goodbye!

*Catherine Croghan,  
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

## VOCABULARY

back pain	Rückenschmerzen
common	verbreitet
severe	schwerwiegend
disability	Behinderung, bzw. Arbeitsunfähigkeit, Gleichgewichtsstörung
conditions	(hier) Leiden, bzw. Beschwerden
prevalence	Häufigkeit
obesity	Adipositas
lack	Mangel
employment	Beschäftigung
sedentary	sitzend
posture	Haltung
spine	Wirbelsäule
radiate out	ausstrahlen
injured	verletzt
stresses and strains	Belastungen
habits	Gewohnheiten
jammed	eingeklemmt
awkward	ungünstig
apply	auftragen
facilitate	begünstigen