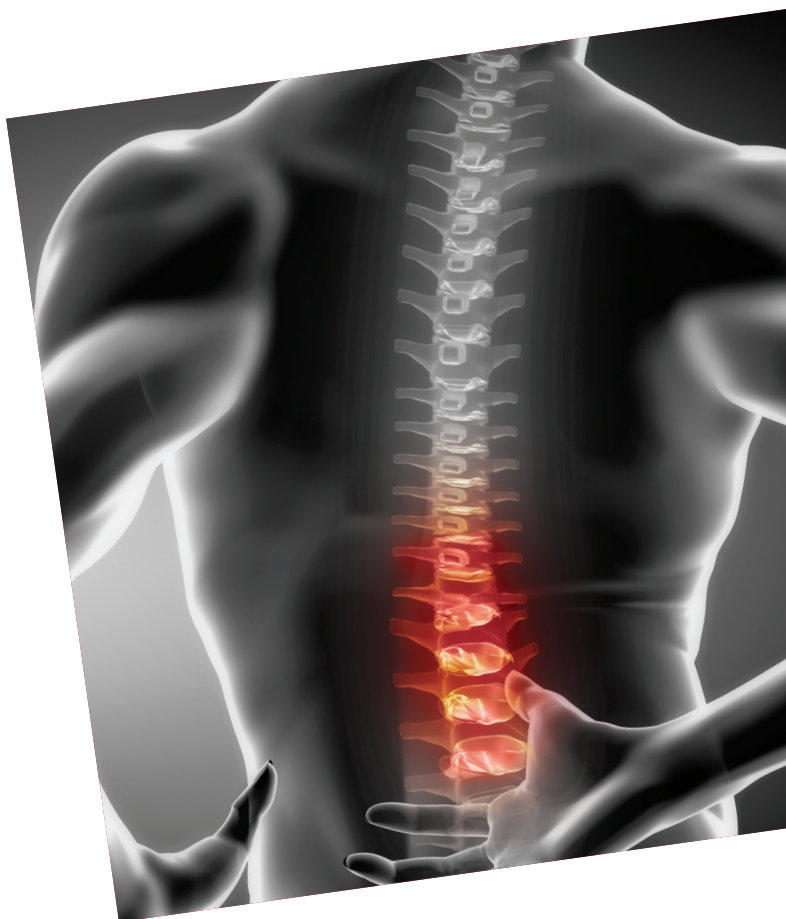


Back Pain



The Department of Orthopaedics offers specialist medical and surgical treatments on musculoskeletal disorders, joint replacements, foot and ankle disorders, among other trauma injuries. Our consultants and surgeons work closely with sports medicine physicians, physiotherapists, podiatrists and other healthcare professionals to help patients return to their normal activities after surgery.

What is back pain?

The spine consists of bones (vertebrae) that are held together by muscles, tendons and ligaments. They are cushioned by shock-absorbing discs and a problem in any part of the spine can cause back pain.

Back pain may occur suddenly as a result of a sprain, strain, or gradually as a result of the wear-and-tear on the spine. Most back pain are not serious and will resolve on their own in a few weeks. Surgery is rarely needed and considered only as a last resort.

What causes back pain?

The most common cause of back pain is injury to a muscle (strain) or ligament (sprain). Their causes include improper lifting, poor posture, lack of regular exercise and being overweight.

Factors contributing to back pain:

- Over-exerting your back, e.g. lifting or moving heavy objects.
- Pressure and stress at work that cause muscles to tense and tighten. This can contribute/worsen back pain.
- Repeating certain movements that lead to muscle fatigue or injury, particularly if you are stretching to the limit of your range of motion or when your body is in an awkward position.
- Slouching, which exaggerates your back's natural curves and leads to muscle fatigue and injury.



The more serious causes of back pain include vertebral fracture or slipped disc, disc degeneration, arthritis, tumour and infections.

Back pain can also be caused by non spine-related problems such as pancreatitis, gallstones, and kidney stones.

When should I see a doctor?

Medical advice is required if back pain does not get better after a few weeks or if it is accompanied by other symptoms such as fever and weight loss. Serious conditions like infections of the spine, tumours or fractures will need to be excluded.

Symptoms that suggest serious back pain:

- Associated weakness, numbness or tingling in one or both legs
- Bowel or bladder control problems
- Constant or intense pain
- Fever or unintended weight loss
- Pain that shoots down one or both legs, especially if the pain extends below your knee



How can I avoid back pain?

Avoid prolonged sitting or standing

If you must sit or stand for prolonged periods, change your position regularly. Try taking a 30-second break every 15 minutes to stretch, move or relax.

Good posture

Keep your back straight to put less strain on your muscles. Choose a chair that allows you to rest both your feet flat on the floor while your knees level with your hips. If you need to pick things up from the floor, do so with your back straight and knees bent.

Manage stress

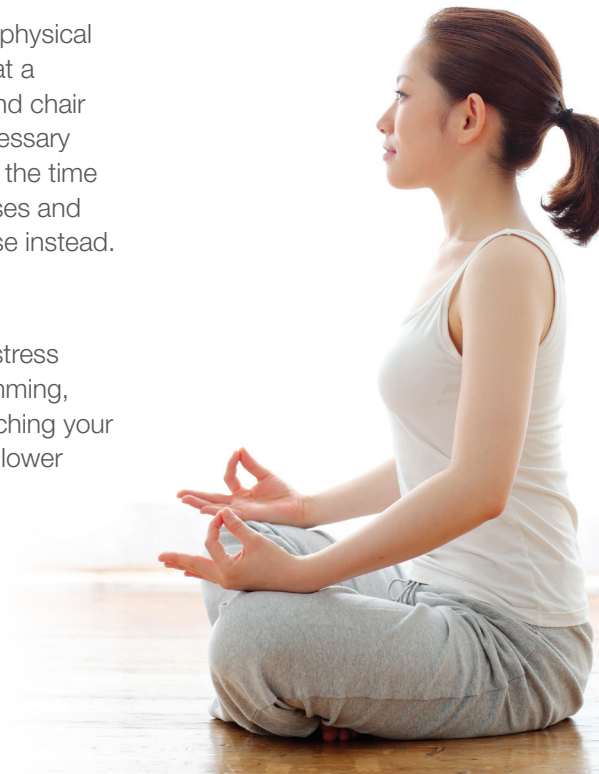
Stress can make you tensed and more prone to an injury. Deep-breathing exercises, taking a walk around the block or talking to a trusted friend about your frustrations are good ways to manage stress.

Modify repetitive tasks

Modify repetitive tasks to reduce the physical demands on your body. If you work at a computer, make sure your monitor and chair are positioned properly. Avoid unnecessary bending, twisting and reaching. Limit the time spent carrying heavy briefcases, purses and bags. Consider using a rolling suitcase instead.

Physical activity

Maintain a healthy weight to reduce stress on your back. Aerobic exercise, swimming, walking, and strengthening and stretching your back muscles/abdomen are ways to lower your weight.



For more information

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6716 5500

www.ntfgh.com.sg

www.jch.com.sg

Clinic opening hours

Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm, Saturday 8.30am – 12.30pm

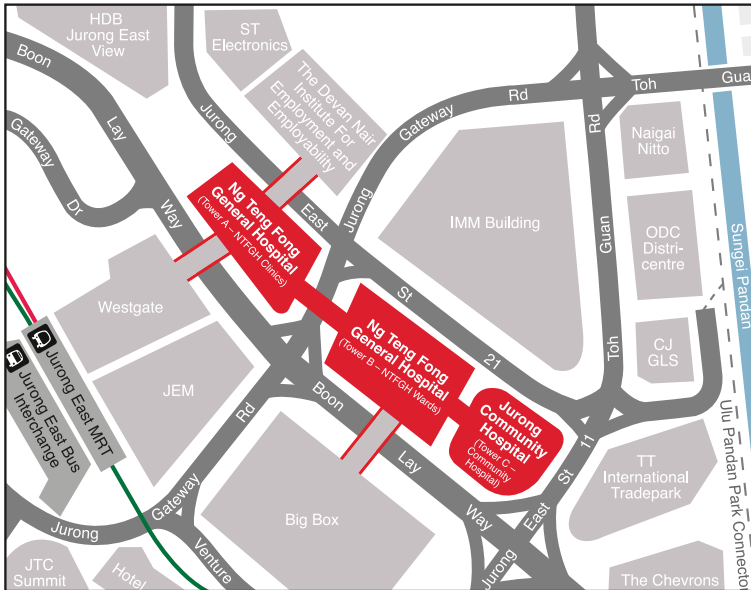
Dental clinic: Monday – Thursday 8.00am – 5.30pm, Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm

Appointments

Appointment line: 6716 2222

Dental appointment line: 6716 2233

Getting there



By train

Jurong East MRT Station

By bus

From Jurong East Bus Interchange

41, 49, 51, 52, 66, 66B, 78, 78A, 79, 79A, 97, 97E, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 183, 183B, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

Along Boon Lay Way

99, Private bus service 625, 990

Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.