

Back Exercise for Pain Relief

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Video: Why is Exercise Important for Lower Back Pain?

One of the keys to recovering from an episode of back pain or surgery, and to help avoid future recurrences of back pain, is to pursue appropriate rehabilitation and exercise. A comprehensive exercise regimen should include a combination of **stretching, strengthening, and aerobic conditioning of the back and body**. This requires a basic understanding of the types of muscles that need to be conditioned



types of exercises needed to fully rehabilitate patient

There are three types of muscles that support the spine:

- **Extensors** (back and gluteal muscles), which are used to straighten the back (stand), lift and extend, and move the thighs out away from the body.
- **Flexors** (abdominal and iliopsoas muscles), which are used to bend and support the spine from the front; they also control the arch of the lumbar (lower) spine and flex and move the thigh in toward the body.
- **Obliques or Rotators** (side muscles), which are used to stabilize the spine when upright; they rotate the spine and help maintain proper posture and spinal curvature.

main muscles that correlate with the back to focus on

While some of these muscles are used in everyday life, most do not get adequate exercise from daily activities and tend to weaken with age unless they are **specifically exercised**.

need to focus on getting main 3 muscles worked on

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For all forms of exercise, it is advisable to see a trained and licensed physical therapist, occupational therapist, chiropractic physician, or physical medicine and rehabilitation physician (also called a **physiatrist**). Depending on the specific diagnosis and level of pain, the exercise program will be very **different**, and these specialists are trained to develop an appropriate exercise program and provide instruction on correct form and technique.

variety of treatments for back

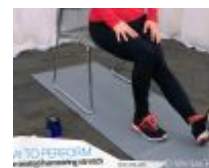
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Stretching

See Hamstring Exercises Video

Any form of inactivity, especially if an injured back is involved, is usually associated with some progressive stiffness. Therefore, it is necessary to **push the range of motion as far as can be tolerated** (in a controlled manner). Patients with chronic pain may find it takes **weeks or months** of stretching to mobilize the spine and soft tissues, but will find that the increase in motion provides meaningful and sustained relief of their back pain.

stretching a little farther than what the patient thinks they can do in order to get the full stretch where the pain is



takes time to heal

Stretching exercise should focus on achieving flexibility and elasticity in the disc, muscles, ligaments, and tendons. Additionally, it is important to **activate and strengthen muscles not directly involved with the injured area**, such as the arms and legs. For example, hamstring tightness limits motion in the pelvis and can place it in a position that increases stress across the low back, so **hamstring stretching is an important part of alleviating low back pain**.

stretch other areas as well that aren't in pain

hamstring is another muscle that creates pain in the low back

- See [Stretching for Back Pain Relief](#)

Specialized equipment is available that helps repetitions to be done in the same manner so that progress can be identified and the level of exercise regulated.

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Strengthening

back strengthening is just as important as stretching

It is thought that future episodes of back pain are less likely to occur if **back strengthening** is accomplished than if mere pain relief is achieved with just stretching. An episode of back pain that lasts for more than two weeks should be treated with proper strengthening exercise to **prevent a recurring cycle of pain and weakness.**

back pain can reoccur if patient doesn't do exercises

There are two primary forms of exercise for strengthening and/or pain relief that tend to be used for specific conditions. When appropriate, the two forms of physical therapy may also be combined.

- **McKenzie exercise**, in general focuses on extending the spine to reduce pain generated from a collapsed disc space (e.g. from degenerative disc disease). Theoretically, **extension may also help reduce a herniated disc and reduce pressure on a nerve root.** For patients who are suffering from **leg pain** due to a herniated disc (e.g. sciatica), extending the spine may help reduce the leg pain by "centralizing" the pain (**moving the pain from the leg to the lower back**). For most people, back pain is usually more tolerable than leg pain. Sometimes, based on the structured evaluation, **flexion exercises** are appropriate.

pain from leg can cause low back pain

types of exercises in order to extend spine

- See [What is the McKenzie Method for Back Pain and Neck Pain?](#)

- **Lumbar stabilization exercise** focus on finding the patient's "neutral" spine, that is, the position that allows the patient to feel most comfortable. The back muscles are then exercised to teach the spine how to stay in this position. Performed on an ongoing basis, these exercises can help keep the back strong and well-positioned. Special attention is paid to the **extensor muscles of the lower back with resistance exercise.**

keep balance neutral and not curved up or down(slouching)

- See [Lower Back Stabilization Exercises for Back Pain](#)

Additionally, a strengthening program that involves progressive loading and unloading of the lumbar spine by means of flexion/extension exercise can reduce pain and increase the perception of improved back strength. This training, called **facilitation**, is best accomplished when the muscles to be facilitated are isolated in some way so that **other muscles cannot take over the job.** Often specific equipment is required to achieve that goal.

process

Low-Impact Aerobic Conditioning

working out can prevent from having low back pain

Finally, conditioning through low-impact aerobic exercise is very important for both rehabilitation and maintenance of the lower back. **Aerobically fit patients will have fewer episodes of low back pain,** and will experience less pain when an episode occurs. Well-conditioned patients are also more likely to maintain their regular routine, whereas patients with **chronic low back pain who do not work on aerobic conditioning are likely to gradually lose their ability to perform everyday activities.**

patients who are not aerobically fit experience more low back pain and can limit patient from doing normal activities

Examples of low impact aerobic exercise that many people with back pain can tolerate include:

- **Water therapy** (also called pool therapy). For people with a great deal of pain, water therapy provides a gentle form of conditioning as the **water counteracts gravity making many stretching movements easier and provides buoyancy as well as mild resistance.** water therapy is better for patients with severe pain
- **Walking.** Many people think that walking as part of their daily routine (e.g. at work or while shopping) is enough. However, this stop-and-start type of walking is not adequate for aerobic conditioning. Instead, **continuous walking at a sustained pace for a minimum of twenty to thirty minutes is required** to provide aerobic conditioning. walking on treadmill is beneficial

- **Stationary biking.** Riding a stationary bicycle provides aerobic conditioning with minimal impact on the spine. This is also a good exercise option for people who are **more comfortable positioned leaning forward.**

not as much pressure on the spine with bike machine

Choosing the most appropriate form of exercise depends upon the nature of the injury and an individual's exercise preferences. It may be helpful to discuss options with a physical therapist, or physician to identify which form of aerobic exercise is best to incorporate into an **exercise routine.**

every exercise routine is different based on what the patient needs and what the physical therapist thinks is best