

Back Exercise

A Guide For Patients/Families



Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Services



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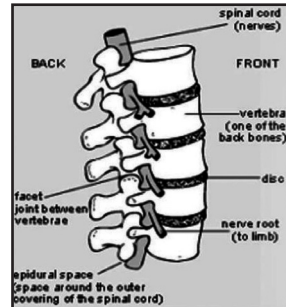
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Detail of the spinal column

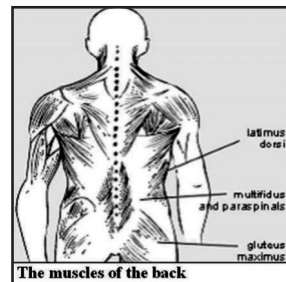
The back is a complicated structure built around the bones of the spinal column. The spinal column consists of 33 bones (vertebrae). The bones of the spine are connected to one another by the discs at the front and by the facet joints at the back.

The nerves of the spinal cord, which connect the brain to the rest of the body, run down in a hollow channel in the spine. Where the nerves pass out from the spinal column on their way to the muscles of the arms and legs. The bones of the back are also held together by tough bands called ligaments which, together with the spinal muscles, keep the back strong.



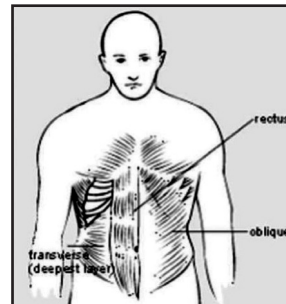
Why get a bad back?

Sprains of the back are a part of everyday life. Often an awkward movement may have disturbed the back balance and resulted in a muscle pull or sprained a ligament. Most cases of back pain are due to these sprains, which usually heal themselves within a short time.




The muscles of the back

Sometimes back pain is due to a 'slipped' disc, in which part of a disc may press on a sensitive structure such as a nerve. More persistent back pain can occur in association



What can be done for persistent back pain?

If back pain lasts for many months you will need help to cope. The answer may be a pain management programme which aims to teach you how to control, and live with, pain. Understandably, avoid situations which make back pain worse, such as certain positions and activities. However, in persistent back pain the pain may not be an indication of damage or inflammation.



Education, plays an important part in the pain management approach, and will include a full explanation of the physical and psychological factors. It is usually possible for people to exercise and get fit. This may be a slow process, but it helps people regain their physical confidence. Specific exercises also help to strengthen the back muscles that have become weak with lack of use.

Pain management programmes include education, exercise, coping strategies and the use of medication, and are delivered by your Doctors and Physiotherapists.

What back exercises can help?



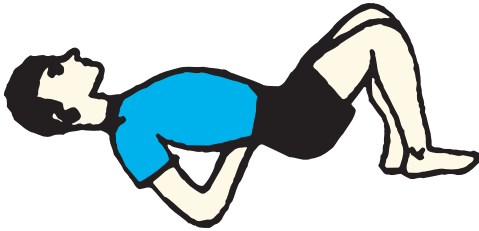
Exercise is the most important way that can help. Any form of continuing pain will mean that you stop moving well. This leads to your muscles wasting and this will make your back weaker and easily tires. So you need to restore strength and flexibility in your back. The body needs strong back muscles to work as a shock absorber.

The exercises fall into three main groups:

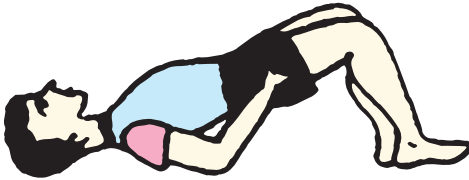
- Stretching exercises; This include exercises for the back and leg muscles.
- Strength, stamina and stabilizing exercise; These include exercises for the back, stomach and leg muscles
- Exercise for general fitness; This include any exercise which makes the person out of breath, such as swimming, cycling or fitness classes.

You may have to reorganize your daily routine in order to fit, the exercises plan to do atleast 30-45 minutes a day. Regular exercise do not only keep your back fit but also help to strengthen bones, and will release natural chemicals (endorphins) which are body's own painkillers. People who have arthritis in other joints can also do appropriate back exercises, but they may need different exercises in this case it is best to take advice from the physiotherapist.

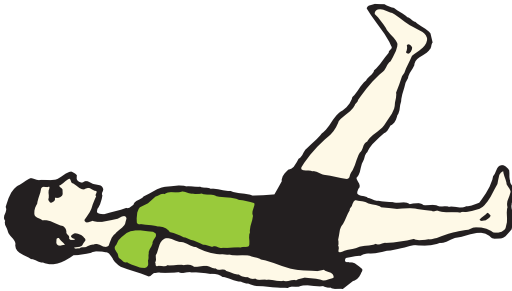
Back Flexion Exercises



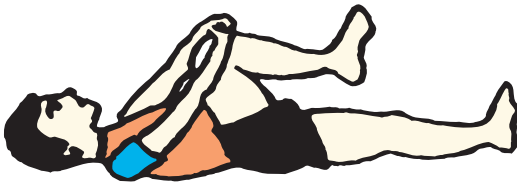
Exercise-1



Exercise-2



Exercise-3

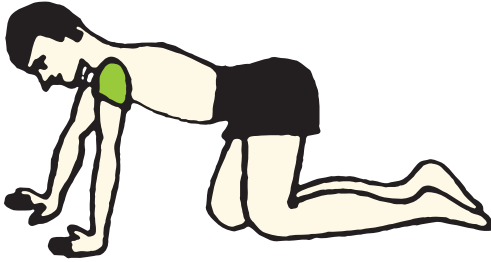


Exercise-4



Exercise-5

Back Extension Exercises



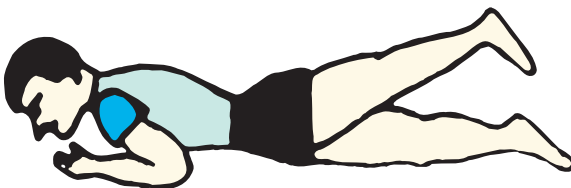
Exercise-6



Exercise-7



Exercise-8



Exercise-9

What sort of things might make back pain worse?



Everyone is different but generally there are a number of situations which will make back pain worse:

- Sitting too long in one position especially in a poor position, e.g. slumped in a chair.
- Driving is often a situation you cannot avoid, but make sure the seat is adjusted correctly for your height (use a cushion to sit on if necessary). Should also maintain lumbar curve, which is the curve that forms the hollow in the lower part of your back, and take regular breaks when on a long journey.
- Spending long periods bending over such as when gardening. Use special gardening tools.
- Try to avoid the worrying and stress since too much worry can often make your back pain worse.



Should I get a new bed?

Many people with back pain prefer a firm surface to lie and sleep on as they feel their back is better supported in this way. Many so-called orthopaedic beds provide this level of firmness. However, you may be able to get the same effect just by putting a board under your mattress.

Does any special diets help?

If you are overweight? should consider a weight reducing diet because of extra strain on back, leg and joints. Exercise will help to lose weight.

What will the future hold for me?

Everyone is different, so it is impossible to describes typical person with back pain. Don't forget that this is a common problem, so many of the people around you are back pain sufferers. As mentioned earlier, people who have had one spell of back pain tend to get more - these spells may become more frequent and last longer. It may be possible for you to prevent this happening. Even if the back pain becomes persistent it may be possible to avoid the disability associated with it.

Summary: What can I do to help myself?

- Remember, do not panic! Most spells of back pain will get better.
- Do not rest for too long after the start of the pain. Too much rest is bad for you - your muscles will become flabby, your bones become thin (lose density), and it becomes even harder to get going again.
- Gradually increase your normal activities, avoiding painful movements at first.
- Do your back exercises regularly. This is a chance to fight back and with time your back will become stronger and you will feel more confident about it. You will be able to lift again within the safety limits recommended.
- Take up some additional form of exercise like bikes and swimming.

For further information, please call:

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