

Exercises for a Healthy Back

Use these simple exercises to keep your back in good shape.

Regular aerobic and weight-bearing exercise (3-5 times per week) will improve your overall fitness and decrease the likelihood of back injury.

Follow these simple rules:

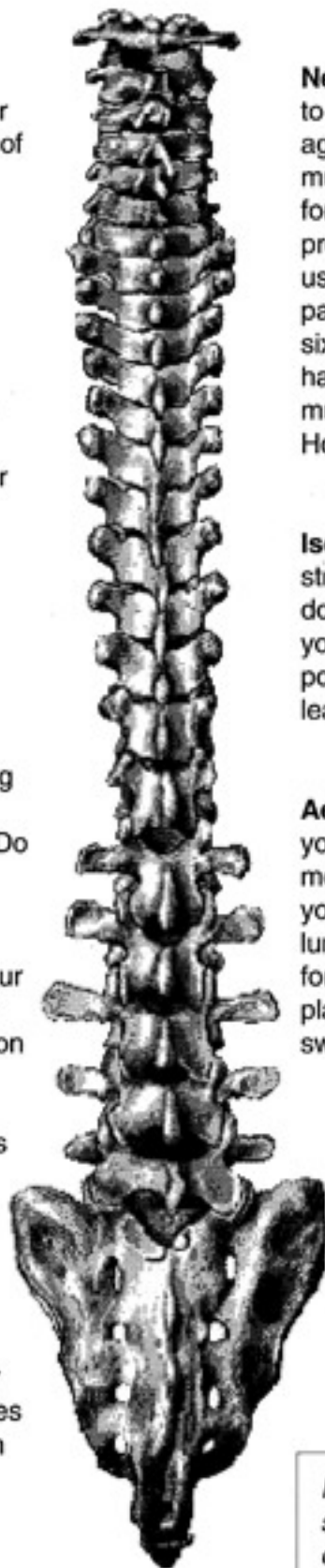
- 1) Do each exercise slowly.
- 2) Do each exercise twice a day.
- 3) Start with five repetitions of each exercise, and work up to ten repetitions.
- 4) If an exercise increases your back pain after five repetitions, stop.
- 5) Always remember to begin and end your exercise session with stretching!

Consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.

Modified Sit-up - Strong abdominal muscles protect your back! Slowly raise your shoulders off the ground while keeping your chin tucked. Touch your fingertips to your knees and hold for the count of five. Do not arch your back.

Straight Leg Raise - This strengthens your legs and abdominal muscles. Lie on your back with one knee bent so the foot is flat on the floor; keep the other leg straight and slowly raise it 8" off the floor. Hold for five seconds, lower and relax; repeat five times then change legs.

Leg Lifts - Lie on your right side (on the floor) with your right leg bent slightly. Stretch your right arm flat in front of you and use it for balance. Align your shoulder and hips. Slowly lift your left leg 8-10 inches then lower slowly. Repeat five times. Turn over and repeat on your left side, raising your right leg.



Neck Press - This is an isometric exercise to strengthen your neck. Press your palm against your forehead, then use your neck muscles to push against your palm. Hold for ten seconds and repeat six times. Then press your palm against your temple and use your neck muscles to push against your palm, holding for ten seconds and repeating six times on each side. Then cup both hands behind your head and use your neck muscles to press back into your hands. Hold for ten seconds, and repeat six times.

Isometric Abs - This easy way to strengthen your stomach muscles can be done standing or sitting. Exhale and pull your abdominal muscles in as tightly as possible. Hold for five seconds then release; repeat ten times.

Aerobic Exercise - Aerobic exercise raises your heart rate with continuous, rhythmic movement and, done regularly, will increase your stamina and strengthen your heart and lungs. It should be done 3-5 times per week for at least 20 minutes. Walking is the best place to start, but bicycling, jogging and swimming are good options, too.

The more you know, the better chance you have of avoiding back pain – which affects 80% of the adult population and is the second most common reason people visit their doctors. If you have back pain or want to know how to avoid it, consult a spine care specialist.

For more information and to find a spine specialist near you, visit the North American Spine Society Web site at www.spine.org, or call toll-free (877) SpineDr.