

Living with Lower Back pain

In any two-week period of time, between 25 and 33% of all adults get some form of back pain. In about 85% of all acute back pain cases, the exact cause cannot be identified. 80% to 90% of back pain resolves itself within a month to six months.

It is vital to seek expert advice from a physiotherapist, chiropractor or a doctor for tailor made and appropriate exercises that will help you manage your back pain and also before embarking on any new exercise regime.

Regular exercise increases the back and abdominal muscle strength and flexibility, helping to support and align your back. Overall flexibility in the hips and the upper legs assures correct pelvic bone alignment, which all helps to prevent injuries. People with a sedentary lifestyle are prone to more back problems and unfortunately are also more prone to becoming overweight – which means double trouble for your back.

Here are a few tips:

Stretching

Any exercise regime should include some stretching exercises. Stretching increases blood flow and relieves the tension in the muscles. Make a point of taking a stretch break every day. Stretch whatever feels tight. Stretching should be by slow and controlled movements and you should stretch to your tolerance. Even if you can't exercise daily – stretch daily!

An exercise a day will help you keep back pain away

Although many people avoid exercise whilst suffering from back pain, it has been proven that exercise will help ease back pain and restore back function. If you do suffer from pain whilst exercising, ask your physiotherapist or chiropractor to help you overcome this. It is vital that you always exercise to the level at which you feel comfortable. Whilst in a stretch break, try some of these exercises that will help you target a specific area e.g.

Neck:

Chin Tucks: sit up tall and look straight ahead. Slowly tuck your chin in towards you and then hold for 5-10 seconds, before relaxing your chin.

Upper back:

Shoulder blade pinch: keep your arms by your side and bend your elbows to 90 degrees. Then squeeze your shoulder blades together downward and backward. Keep your back and head still. Hold for 5-10 seconds and repeat the exercise 5 times.

There are several easy lower back exercises, but because it targets the problem area and technique is important, it is best if you ask your physiotherapist or chiropractor for the exercises best suited for you.

Posture

Poor posture over time causes muscle imbalances that could lead to pain or discomfort. That is why you were always told as a child to stand up straight, and to sit in your chair, rather than lie in it.

Slouching forces the head slightly forward which can lead to tension in the neck, shoulders and lower back. Try to become more aware of your posture. If you stand, try to maintain a neutral pelvic position, don't push your hips forward or backward and avoid rounding your back. Wear comfortable shoes, especially if you are on your feet all day. If you sit, use a seat with good lower back support and keep your knees and hips level. When lifting something, hold the load close to your body, try to keep your back straight and bend at the knees. In this position your legs will take most of the strain.

The experts say that the following is the correct standing posture:

"Your feet should be shoulder width apart. Your weight should be evenly distributed over your heel and ball of your foot. Hold your knees slightly relaxed not locked. Shoulders should be straight not rounded and try to align your ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line."