MY EXACT 8 STEP PROCESS FOR HEALING YOUR BACK PAIN NATURALLY

YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR GREATEST WEALTH

Dr. Ehrin Parker DO

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BY

DR. EHRIN PARKER DO

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INTRODUCTION

Lower back pain symptoms are a common medical condition signifying the problems of the lower back. It affects the lower part of the body. Pain is felt and it travels in the ribs, particularly in the back or in the upper part of legs. This pain starts suddenly and could be a follow up of strain or an injury. Sometimes the pain may not have an anatomical cause. Sitting up or turning over may be difficult and even worse could be bending or sitting. Even a sneeze or a cough can be painful.

Identifying Marks

Common indications of backache for people less than 60 years old will be pain in legs or numbness and pain during movement and sitting. Older people will have symptoms like increasing back pain during the morning and evening periods with stiffness in the back and pain is also felt downwards in the legs. Psychological reasons play main role in the level of the pain and a person's attitude and situation plays an active role. Neurological signs like weakening, feeling of numbness or tingling sometimes accompany the pain. Immediate attention is needed if there is a dysfunction of the bladder or in the bowel and weakness or numbness in the groin area.

Triggering Factors

The sources of this pain are many. Some of them are: small fractures to the spine due to osteoporosis; ruptured or herniated discomfort; muscle spasm; degeneration of the disc; spinal stenosis or narrowing of the spinal canal; poor alignment of the vertebrae; tears or strain to the muscles or ligaments supporting the back; spine curvatures that may be inherited and are seen in children and teens; and other medical conditions like fibromyalgia.

Risk GroupsM

You carry a greater risk of suffering from low backache if you:-

- Work in construction or any job requiring heavy lifting
- Are pregnant
- Have bad posture
- Are over 30 years of age
- Smoke and are overweight
- Have a low pain threshold
- Have arthritis or osteoporosis
- Feel depressed or stressed

Curing Symptoms

But in spite of all these threats, causes and symptoms, the good news is that lower backache indications can be treated by employing one of the several treatment options available which promise to cure the pain as efficiently as possible.

Back pain normally gets resolved within weeks but the pain undergone by the patients is unbearable. Conservational treatments are normally taken for backpain since it is temporary and slowly resolve with time. If the backache continues for six weeks or less, it's referred to as acute. If this continues for less than 12 weeks, it is described as sub-acute. It's termed as chronic if it persists for more than three months. For a speedy recovery, proper treatment has to be started only after knowing the exact cause for its occurrence. Precautions like avoidance of stress and maintaining proper weight with regular exercise help in eliminating the lower back pain symptoms.

So what are the 5 big questions?

1. Where is your lower back pain?

Important as this tells you this is the most likely area to target. Is your pain central to the spine, is it out from the spine, into the buttock or referred down the leg. The location of pain generally tells you how severe it is. The further your pain travels from your spine, the more likely you have a greater injury.

2. How did your low back pains occur?

If you have had a fall or injury then it is best to seek help. Pain levels do not always indicate the severity. Many people wait for weeks before they consult a practitioner, only to find out they have fractured a joint, injured an area and it is potentially serious. So with all injuries seek help first, rule out the bigger problems and then address your lower back pain issues.

3. What makes it better?

If you find the activity makes your lower back pain better, then it is more likely muscular and not too serious. If activity makes it worse, then it is either a joint problem or the injury is more severe - seek help.

4. What makes your lower back pain worse?

This is the big question. Does straining, coughing or deep breathing make your pan worse? If so seek immediate attention. If straining of any type makes pain worse then you may have a disc injury or a severe spinal condition, such as a fracture. Straining will aggravate the area and increase the lower back pain - seek help!!

5. What other symptoms occur?

This is also as important as question 4. If you lose bowel or bladder control then you may have spinal cord problems or a severe injury. If you start to get headaches, referred pain, fever or any other changes in your general health then seek immediate medical help. Bypass your Chiropractor, Physiotherapist etc and go directly to medical help or your local hospital. Rule out the serious first and then aim to remove your low back pains.

Although over 90% of all lower back pain issues are usually minor and easily correctable. There are times when your lower back pain is more serious. This is when you need to be aware of the issues that make your lower back pain more serious.

Low back pain is the second most common cause of disability in the United States and a common reason for missing work."

If you have lower back pain, you are not alone. About 80 percent of adults experience low back pain at some point in their lifetimes. It is the most common cause of job-related disability and a leading contributor to missed work days. In a large survey, more than a quarter of adults reported experiencing low back pain during the past 3 months.

Men and women are equally affected by low back pain, which can range in intensity from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp sensation that leaves the person incapacitated. Pain can begin abruptly as a result of an accident or by lifting something heavy, or it can develop over time due to age-related changes of the spine. Sedentary lifestyles also can set the stage for low back pain, especially when a weekday routine of getting too little exercise is punctuated by strenuous weekend workout. What can you do to help yourself, what can you do to prevent this overwhelming problem?

CHAPTER 1
LIFT WITH YOUR LEGS

Lift with your legs, Never lift and twist at the same time.

This is the most common reason people conclude when thinking about back pain. When you go to the doctor they ask you, did you lift something heavy? But this is not always the case. It is a cause no doubt about that. But this is not the reason for the ever increase in back pain in America.

Most people think that the human spine is one of evolution's great flaws. After all, around 80% of adults suffer from lower-back pain. What more evidence do you need? The truth is, the spine is a robust structure. We're just using it incorrectly. Everybody "knows" that you put your back out if you lift objects that are too heavy. As a result, many workplaces have introduced lifting training and ergonomic equipment, such as hoists, in an effort to reduce back injuries.

The common advice from lifting training is to avoid heavy lifting where possible. However, research has shown that such training is largely ineffective at reducing back pain and back injury. It seems that a different approach is needed. Human tissue needs to be exposed to loads to become strong – and the spine is a good example of this. Regular loading prepares the joints, muscle and ligaments for normal tasks. Nobody would expect to run a marathon without preparing the body for such loading, so it seems logical that to be able to lift a weight requires exposure to that activity.

FINDING THE SWEET SPOT

Those teaching that lifting should be avoided, indicate that it is not just the one-off heavy lift that is the problem. Repeated and regular bending and lifting of the spine is cited as a risk for back injury, particularly when combined with twisting. Research in elite rowers examines this concept.

Elite rowers fully flex and load their lower backs hundreds of times a day every time they train. Around one-third of this group will complain of an episode of back pain in a 12-month period, of which the vast majority will recover fully. This shows that most rowers do not injure their lower back and that the spine is very tolerant of this activity. It does, however, suggest that bending and loading is indeed an activity that can be associated with onset of back pain, but that there must be more to the story.

There appears to be a loading "sweet spot" where the lower back is gradually trained to cope with the load. Rapid increases in training load with poor recovery is associated with onset of back pain in rowers. Rowers who move well through their hips, knees and other joints are less likely to get back pain. Another finding in rowers, which contradicts traditional "manual handling" training, is that they load their backs with a bent spine. The fact that the low back is tolerant to being loaded in this position can be explained.

MORE STABLE WHEN CURVED

The spine is in fact a more stable structure when it is curved. Advice to keep the back straight and bend at the hips when lifting is to encourage the use of the large muscles around the hips and in the legs, to help with the load. This advice may be misguided if these muscles are weak due to misuse. The emphasis should be on strengthening these muscles.

People are becoming less active and more overweight, which means they are becoming less fit and less able to tolerate the activity and loading for which we were designed. Recent expert advice highlights that the best way to prevent back pain is with exercise. Rather than advise people to avoid lifting, they should be taught to make regular lifting part of their everyday routine. To build the muscles of the spine, the load must be heavy enough, as with any weight training.

Emphasis should be on creating a fit workforce rather than providing them with lifting equipment. After all, our spines can handle it.

There are three ways that people tend to get a back injury from lifting:

Muscle Injury

Getting out of position during lifting can put a great deal of stress on the lower back muscles, and when the demand is too high on a muscle it can be injured. Too much stress can form tiny tears in a muscle, known as a muscle strain, which is a very common form of back injury.

This type of back injury can be quite painful, making it difficult to move the affected and surrounding area. When a back muscle is strained, it can even be painful to breathe normally. A back strain will typically heal, although it often takes a long time (a few weeks or months).

Disc Injury

The intervertebral discs act like ball bearings and cushions between the vertebrae (bones) in the spine. The discs are comprised of fibrous rings, which can bulge and even break open, or rupture, when injured. A disc injury in the lower back can cause pain that may radiate down into the buttocks and/or leg.

Joint Injury

There are many joints where bones meet bones in the back. Normally theses joints are quite capable of handling the stresses of lifting. However, improper lifting techniques, even with lightweight objects, can irritate these joints and may cause them to become "locked."

There are several things to keep in mind when lifting. Proper form helps avoid muscle, joint, and disc injuries in the back.

The following are three rules to follow in order to avoid painful back injuries:

1. Bend at the Hips, Not the Back

Always be sure to bend at the hips–not the low back. Most people believe bending their knees will ensure a safe lift, but this form alone can still lead to a back injury. The most important tip is to bend the hips and keep the upper body upright as much as possible, pointing forward.

2. Keep the Chest Forward

When the chest is kept forward and the body is bent at the hips, the back is kept straight and back injury can be avoided. The back muscles will then be used most effectively for maintaining good posture, as they are designed to do. The knees will bend automatically so the muscles of the legs and hips will produce the power for lifting correctly.

Twisting is another dangerous mistake that can lead to back injury. The shoulders should be kept in line with the hips to avoid this movement. For changing directions, move the hips first so the shoulders will move in unison. When moving the shoulders first, the hips tend to lag behind creating the dangerous twisting that can cause back injury, especially to the joints in the back and pelvis.

3. Keep the Weight Close to the Body.

The further an object is held from one's center of gravity, the more force required to hold that object up. For example, for most people it is not too difficult to hold a gallon of milk close to the chest, but it can be quite difficult to hold a gallon of milk stretched out in front at arm's reach.

Of course, the milk does not get heavier when it is further from the body, but it does require much more force to hold it up. This extra force will also run through the lower back. Therefore, the closer the object is to one's body, the less likely it is to lead to back injury. If an object is too wide to get it between the knees when lifting, consider getting help from another person instead of trying to lift it alone. Larger objects require lifting at a long reach and increase the load on one's back just like an improper lift technique.

These three rules are applicable to most lifting situations. Following them whenever possible will reduce the amount of stress the back must go through during activity. This in turn makes a person less likely to sustain a back injury even when it is occasionally necessary to break the rules (when there is no other choice).

Of course, there are a few exceptions to these three guidelines. The following provides a quick overview of other safe approaches to lifting.

Golfer's Lift

This technique is very useful to avoid back injury when lifting out of a bin or picking small objects off the floor, such as a golf ball.

For this technique, the knees do not bend. One leg is allowed to come off the floor behind the lifter and acts as a counter balance. The opposite hip bends and the body becomes almost parallel to the

floor, except for the leg bearing the person's weight. One arm reaches to pick up the object while the other is often hanging on a stationary object for support, such as a countertop or the top end of a golf club.

Although the chest does point down toward the floor, it is a safe technique since lifting the back leg allows the spine to stay straight and the counter balance offsets the strain on the back.

Using Momentum

This method is especially helpful to avoid back injury when lifting a heavy object above the level of the waist. If done correctly, it looks like a controlled toss of the object. The lifter can keep moving towards the destination of the object and swing it up to the surface. The object is then allowed to come away from the body and the momentum will help raise it, requiring less effort by the lifter.

Half Kneeling

This approach is useful for picking an awkward object off the floor. In this case, the lifter can kneel behind the object and first lift it on to the bended knee. Now the lifter can either straighten out the back knee to propel forward, or push with the front knee to propel backwards, depending on where the object needs to be carried. The chest may point down when the back leg is straightened, but the back will remain straight.

Again, not every situation will allow a person to use proper body mechanics, but using them on a regular basis whenever possible does greatly reduce a chance of sustaining a back injury while lifting.

CHAPTER 2
MAINTAIN YOUR HEALTHY WEIGHT

Maintain your healthy weight

Belly Fat and Back Pain often go hand in hand. Added weight can and does cause back pain in patients. The excess weight — especially in your belly — strains your back muscles and ligaments, causing back pain. Patients who are overweight or obese and suffer from back pain may not be aware that their excess weight is actually contributing to their back pain.

While it has not been thoroughly studied exactly how excess weight can cause or contribute to back pain, it is known that people who are overweight often are at greater risk for back pain, joint pain and muscle strain than those who are not obese.

In addition to back pain, symptoms exhibited by persons who are obese or severely overweight may include fatigue, as well as difficulty breathing and shortness of breath during short periods. If the fatigue and shortness of breath causes one to avoid activity and exercise, then this can indirectly lead to back pain as lack of exercise contributes to many common forms of back pain.

Let's start by remembering that our spines have a really important job: supporting the rest of our body weight. We've all got over 30 small bones in our spines (vertebrae) that are stacked together and separated with spongy cartilage that absorbs the pressure from all the moving around we do.

Because your upper body weight is supported by your abs and lower back (your core), carrying extra weight in your stomach adds a ton of stress to that system and puts pressure on your intervertebral discs as they try to compensate. (In fact, losing just 4 pounds will take 16 pounds of pressure off of your spine!)

When you're overweight your spine tilts out of its proper alignment, pulls your pelvis forward and can cause the discs to bulge out.

This puts you at risk!

When this happens, stress is distributed unevenly across your spine, seriously increasing your risk of injury or sciatica. Being overweight can also point to a more sedentary lifestyle, meaning the muscles in your lower back and abs are more likely to be weak and less flexible, once again adding to the risk of back trouble.

What Can You Do About It?

I'm not going to pretend that weight loss isn't a serious challenge –it takes a lot of commitment and motivation to change your lifestyle. But think of it this way: Reducing the weight your spine needs to support will do nothing but help your lower back pain – and reduce your risk of things like heart disease and diabetes, too!

"What are the best exercises for overweight people with lower back pain who want to lose weight?"

The best exercises for those who are overweight are low-impact aerobic exercises, including…

Rowing: Many of my readers write in to tell me how much buying a rowing machine has changed their lives – both for their weight, and their pain!

Walking/Jogging on an Elliptical Machine: All of the exercise – none of the joint pain! Elliptical machines are ideal for those who are overweight because they virtually eliminate the impact of walking or running, protecting your joints while giving you a workout that's as intense as you want it to be.

Swimming/Water Therapy: Anything done in water adds a bit of weight resistance while also protecting your joints, muscles, ligaments and spine from the impact of movement with heavy weight. Whether it's walking in the pool, doing arm circles or any other number of low-impact exercises, getting into the pool can help you shed pounds and strengthen your back all at once – reducing your pain!

Get moving – even if it means starting small! Low impact aerobic exercises like walking, biking and swimming can help you lose weight while strengthening your core at the same time.An award-winning study presented by the North American Spine Society found that Americans who are extremely obese have a four-fold increased risk of back pain, yet adding just 20 minutes of light exercise each day can lower that risk by a surprising 32 percent!

Avoid high-impact sports for a while. Football, soccer, basketball – all of these can put stress on the spine with the high-impact movements you need to use. While playing some of these is just fine with low to moderate back pain, you should ask a doctor before participating to make sure you won't aggravate an injury further.

Be deliberate about eating well. You can't lose weight if you're not burning off more calories than you take in – and the easiest way to do that is to reduce unnecessary calories by eating whole foods and watching your portions. I know it is a serious challenge. But nowadays there are really good online weight loss and fitness programs which help you succeed! Very good and well-known is Jillian Michaels online program. Jillian's program features online support, recipes, customized exercises, tools, and motivation! And each member gets a customized weight-loss plan based on his or her activity level, body type, and goals. Jillian's unique triple-threat approach to weight loss — self, science, and sweat — is complete with her famous tough-love and step-by-step advice.

If you're nervous about exercising or want to be sure you won't injure yourself further, talk to a medical professional who can build you a customized plan.

CHAPTER 3

GET UP, WALK OR STAND 30 TIMES A DAY

Get up- walk or stand 30 times a day.

American workers on average sit for 12-15 hours a day. Sitting too long is a big cause of back pain. Just standing and moving for 5 minutes an hour can do wonders for your back. Standing is one of the best ways to reduce your back pain at work. Going further into that this shows walking can lessen pain, hasten healing, boost strength, increase flexibility, and, in the long run, prevent recurrences; just simply putting one foot in front of the other.

A 2004 study in The Spine Journal showed that a single session of an exercise such as walking can reduce low back pain 10 to 50 percent. And a 1993 study found that just 10 minutes of treadmill walking led to a significant reduction in back pain.

Typically, the cause of back pain is a muscular strain or spasm brought on by lugging around heavy objects. But sometimes it strikes with no noticeable cause. The pain usually lasts a few days or weeks, but if the injury involves compressed nerves or spinal discs, the hurt can last months, or even years.

Walking works because it stimulates the brain to release serotonin and endorphins, neurotransmitter chemicals that make you feel better physically and mentally. Walking also blocks pain through distraction. This is known as the gate control theory of pain: When you work the big muscle groups in the trunk and legs -- muscles with correspondingly large nerves -- the signals fired to the brain literally overload pain messages coming from smaller nerves. Walk around the block, stroll the mall, or start off on a treadmill. Always walk on a flat surface while you're healing, because hills force you to lean forward and strain the lower back. Be prepared for some discomfort -- at first. "It sounds paradoxical, but it's better to work through the pain.

95 per cent of people will suffer from back pain at some time in their lives. Fitness walking can provide relief for many people suffering from back pain.

Taking a walk regularly is one of the best things you can do for your back. It promotes muscular development, increases circulation, and speeds the release of endorphins which provide a natural ‘high’.

Yoga teaches us that old age comes with the stiffening of the backbone; and it is this stiffening that causes loss of flexibility in the back and joints, and also affects the roots of the spinal nerves, affecting other functions of the body – circulation, digestion and respiration. Walking does half the job in circulation of blood through the body. For the spine to be healthy it needs to be supple, and for this it must have exercise otherwise it receives less blood – which means less nourishment. Wastes are not carried away; muscles and nerves are affected; tiredness and ill-health ensue. Fitness walking can provide the exercise needed to help keep the back and joints flexible.

Our sedentary lifestyles and bad posture can lead to lower back pain, and sitting for long periods of time can cause a shortening of certain postural muscles. Many lower back injuries are caused

by jogging (where the feet strike the ground with 3-4 times body weight) and dance aerobics (where the feet strike the ground with 4-5 times body weight). Fitness walking provides an ideal programme of exercise which can be built up gradually to give mobility to the back. It will also help those who have suffered an injury to their back (remember that fitness walkers' feet only strike the ground with 1-1.5 times their body weight). And it will help those who have been inactive for a long time and wish to start a moderate fitness programme.

Fitness walking strengthens the muscles in the pelvis and lower back. If you have a back problem, you may actually feel better walking than sitting, as the forward movement of the body reduces the force of gravity on your back. Sitting and standing can both put more strain on the spine than walking. If you sit for long, your body weight is unevenly distributed onto the lower back and hips. People who spend a lot of time driving a car may suffer similar problems. Just as it is important to get up from a chair at regular intervals and go for a walk, so it is for drivers to stop regularly to stretch their legs and go for a walk.

It is important to emphasise that to develop mobility in the back a programme of fitness walking and stretching exercises is necessary. It is total fitness which strengthens the back muscles and helps to alleviate aches and pains. However, if walking gives you shooting leg pain, numbness or you have a serious back problem, consult your doctor before starting out on a fitness walking and exercise programme.

CHAPTER 4

MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE BOTH WHILE STANDING AND SITTING

Maintain good posture both while standing and sitting.

When it comes to posture your mother did know best. Her reminder to stand up straight and stop slouching were good advice. Our spines are strong and stable while you maintain a healthy posture. But when you slouch or stoop your muscles and ligaments strain to keep you balanced. That can lead to back pain.

Now let us examine what a good posture is:

Posture is the position in which you hold your body upright against gravity while standing, sitting or lying down. Good posture involves training your body to stand, walk, sit and lie in positions where the least strain is placed on supporting muscles and ligaments during movement or weight-bearing activities.

Proper posture;

- Keeps bones and joints in the correct alignment so that muscles are being used properly.
- Helps decrease the abnormal wearing of joint surfaces that could result in arthritis.
- Decreases the stress on the ligaments holding the joints of the spine together.
- Prevents the spine from becoming fixed in abnormal positions.
- Prevents fatigue because muscles are being used more efficiently, allowing the body to use less energy.
- Prevents strain or overuse problems.
- Prevents backache and muscular pain.
- Contributes to a good appearance.

Good standing posture

- When standing, keep these tips in mind:
- Stand straight and tall with your shoulders back.
- Keep your head level and in line with your body.
- Pull in your abdomen.
- Keep your feet about shoulder-width apart.
- Don't lock your knees.
- Bear your weight primarily on the balls of your feet.
- Let your hands hang naturally at your sides.

If you have to stand for long periods of time, shift your weight from your toes to your heels or from one foot to the other.

Good sitting posture

- When seated, keep these tips in mind:
- Adjust the height of your chair so that your feet rest flat on the floor or on a footrest and your thighs are parallel to the floor.
- Don't cross your legs. Your ankles should be in front of your knees. Keep a small gap between the back of your knees and the front of your seat.
- If the chair doesn't support your lower back's curve, place a rolled towel or small pillow behind your lower back.
- Stretch the top of your head toward the ceiling, and tuck your chin in slightly.
- Keep your upper back and neck comfortably straight.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed — not elevated, rounded or pulled backward.

Your buttocks should touch the back of your chair.

Sit at the end of your chair and slouch completely.

Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.

Bend your knees at a right angle. Keep your knees even with or slightly higher than your hips.

Keep your feet flat on the floor.

Try to avoid sitting in the same position for more than 30 minutes.

At work, adjust your chair height and work station so you can sit up close to your work and tilt it up at you. Rest your elbows and arms on your chair or desk, keeping your shoulders relaxed.

When sitting in a chair that rolls and pivots, don't twist at the waist while sitting. Instead, turn your whole body.

When standing up from the sitting position, move to the front of the seat of your chair. Stand up by straightening your legs. Avoid bending forward at your waist. Immediately stretch your back by doing 10 standing backbends.

Getting rid of lower back pain can be attained or accomplished in several ways, but in the first place, it is significant for you to get an authentic diagnosis for your specific condition in order for you to properly eliminate your lower back condition with ease. A physician will normally organize for an MRI scan to spot the main cause of your back trouble. So make sure this is done before anything. In most situations, lower kind of back ache will be induced through a muscle spasm. This can be brought about by several causes like sitting in a particular spot for a long period, sleeping on an aged mattress and so on.

What's more, stress as well as tension is known to contribute to back pain. In these types of conditions, lower back pain can be rid of through the use of over the counter drugs like ketoprofen, Tylenol, lbuprofen, aspirin and naproxen. These drugs will aid in the reduction of ache and swelling. However, in severe cases of lower back condition, this can be induced by an injury

sustained by the spine, often brought about by an accident or maybe lifting and twisting simultaneously.

In several situations, an injured spine will cause herniated disc condition that later bring about severe lower back ache symptoms such as spinal stenosis or sciatica; though these ailments may induce lots of inconvenience. Lower back pain relief can easily be availed to get rid of the problem.

In case a lower back problem recently occurred, you will have to rest for one or two days. Frankly, relaxation observed for lower back ache is presently seen as a cure because rest can compel the muscles to turn stiff and will increase the healing period. It's true that over the counter medications help somewhat when it comes to easing lower kind of back trouble. However, these drugs should not be applied for a long period, as they can trigger other health conditions such as addiction, stomach ulcers and the like. One of the most preferred alternatives when it comes to eliminating lower back pain naturally is through exercise.

Lower back pain is often cause by muscle strain or injury and it is very common among adults. Most lower back pain can be reduced if you are active, if you avoid activities and positions that may cause lower back pain. Exercises not only help you reduce back pain but it also helps you recover faster and it also helps you prevent reinjuring your back. Lower back pain exercises to reduce pain are not complicated, do not need any special equipment and can be done at home.

Aerobic exercise conditions your heart and other muscles, maintains good health and speeds up the recovery process. If you are a beginner then you can start with 3-4 days a week of 25-30 minute workouts. Walking or jogging is good to start with. Strengthening exercises are very important for anyone no matter what your age is, especially important if you are middle-aged and having back problems. Muscles, joints and bones get weaker when you get older, so it is vital to exercise your back, stomach and also leg muscles. Too many people only do stomach exercises but they tend to forget the back exercises. If you are doing exercises for the stomach then also do exercises for the back.

Stretching is another important area that people need to focus. Stretching keeps the muscles and tissues flexible and less prone to injury and chronic pain. The lifestyle that we live is very fast and stressful ,so finding the time to do some simple exercises and stretches is essential. For example the Swiss ball is a fantastic way to strengthen your back and stomach muscles because it does not put stress on the back. Doing sit-ups and crunches is not ideal if you have back problems but the Swiss ball is really helpful.

CHAPTER 5
EXERCISE YOUR CORE MUSCLES

Exercise your core muscles

In 2017 research out of Pakistan shows that performing core stabilization exercises is more effective than traditional physical therapy at reducing lower back pain. What are your core muscles? They are your deep lying muscles such as the transverse abdominis (which hook in and around the spine) serve to stabilize the body's entire midsection, When one muscle, or group of muscles, is weak, another one is forced to pick up the slack. When the abdominal muscle are weak it places stress on the back muscles, thereby causing pain. There are many core muscle workouts.

Core strengthening is more than just achieving six-pack abs. Developing strong abdominal muscles may actually help prevent back pain by making you less prone to back injuries and teaching you proper spinal alignment.

Many people have back pain—whether it's upper back pain or low back pain—and this may be partly caused by weak abdominal muscles. Since your abs are the front anchor of your spine, if they are weak, then the other structures supporting your spine (your back muscles, for example) will have to work harder. By developing stronger core muscles, you'll be less likely to injure or strain your back muscles.

If you think about it, your core is in the center of your body. It needs to be strong to support the weight of your entire body, including your back and neck. Adding core strengthening to your exercise routine can help protect your back and neck. By boosting your core strength, you'll also be less likely to rely on other back pain treatments, such as medications. It's important to incorporate exercises that work all of your abdominal muscles equally. Core exercises should involve the major muscles in your abdomen, including your internal and external obliques and the transverse abdominals.

The following exercises are among the safest for the lower back, and they comprise a well-rounded core-strengthening routine. Of course, low back pain can be due to any number of specific causes, such as degenerative disease or acute trauma, so it's important that you see your doctor to rule out these possibilities before you get started.

Lie flat on your back with your arms and legs up in the air, knees bent and arms straight. Press your lower back into the floor, and brace your core (a). From here, lower one leg until your heel just about touches the floor while also lowering your opposite arm toward the floor above your head (b). Pause, then squeeze your core to lift them back up to return to start (c). Repeat with the opposite arm and leg (d). Continue alternating for 30 seconds. Repeat three times.

Pelvic Tilt with Bracing This exercise engages the deep core muscles of the pelvic floor and abdomen while actively moving the lumbar spine through its natural range of motion. Lie on a mat on your back with your knees comfortably bent and feet flat on the floor. Place two fingertips at the top of each pelvic bone. This will cue you to pay attention to the movement of your pelvis

throughout the exercise. Take a normal breath in and forcefully exhale it out. As you do, contract your pelvic floor (the motion you'd use to stop the flow of urination) and tighten the inner wall of your abdomen as though you are bracing for a punch. Take a moment to feel these muscles contracting — this is your deep core. Now take a breath and, on the exhale, tilt the front of your pelvis toward your ribcage, flattening your lower back a bit. On the next inhale, tilt your pelvis away from your ribcage, creating some space between the floor and your lower back. Do five to 10 repetitions, paying close attention to the core muscles involved and the natural range of motion in your low back and pelvis.

Swimmers By working one side of the body at a time in a contralateral or opposite-side fashion, this exercise strengthens the erector spinae (muscles near the spine) without placing a great deal of stress on the lumbar vertebrae. Lie on your stomach on a mat with your arms stretched out overhead. Keeping a neutral spine, slowly raise your right arm and left leg a few inches off the mat simultaneously. Slowly lower them back down, then repeat the motion with the left arm/right leg. As you go, think of making your spine long as you reach forward with your arm and backward with your leg. Don't allow your body to rotate at the hips, and keep your toes pointed toward the floor. Do a total of 20 repetitions, 10 on each side, alternating as you go.

Bird Dog This popular exercise is similar to Swimmers, but it incorporates more movement, and therefore more force generation in the hip and buttocks muscles. Kneel on a mat on all fours, making sure your spine is in its neutral S-curve. Engage the deep core muscles as you did during the pelvic tilts, then slowly reach forward with your right arm as you extend your left leg out behind you. Slowly return them to the mat and repeat on the other side. Note that keeping your balance requires using a great many of the core's stabilizer muscles. Avoid the tendency to rush, which can make this exercise seem easy and lessen its effectiveness. As you go, don't allow your hips to dip or your upper thigh to rotate outward. Placing a yardstick across your lower back is a very effective guide to proper form. Do a total of 20 repetitions, 10 on each side, alternating as you go.

Marching Bridge This exercise works the muscles of the buttocks, which are often overly lax and weak from sitting for hours each day. As a bonus, it also simultaneously stretches the hip flexors. Lie on your back on a mat with knees bent 90 degrees and feet flat on the floor. Engage the muscles of the deep core and move into a bridge position by lifting the buttocks off the floor. Don't force your belly up too high by arching your back; be sure to keep the natural curve in your lower spine. Your buttocks muscles should be actively working to keep your body in a straight line from your shoulders to knees. Now lift your left foot off the ground and straighten your left leg, extending that line of your body through your left heel. Return it to the floor and repeat with your right leg. Be sure your hips stay square and you don't rotate or dip as you go. Begin with just a few repetitions and work your way up to a total of 20 or 30 alternating repetitions as you get stronger.

CHAPTER 6

DON'T CARRY A HEAVY PURSE OR BACK PACK ON A SINGLE SHOULDER.

Don't carry a heavy purse or back pack on a single shoulder.

Carrying a heavy bag can create a number of potential problems for your back and your health in general, and this is determined both by the type of bag you carry as well as how heavy said bag is, and how often you are carrying it. It places weight unevenly on your back. Your back can hold weight more especially in it is even on both shoulders.

When You Carry A Heavy Purse Or Back Pack On A Single Shoulder

Problem is that a heavy shoulder bag places an uneven strain on your spine, core and legs which forces you to brace yourself in order to remain upright and to maintain a good centre of balance. Specifically this requires you to engage muscles in your core involved with maintaining an upright posture (against lateral pressure) which means working the obliques as well as the quadratus lumborum. The obliques are the muscles next to your abs which you use in order to torque your body and to bend from side-to-side. Meanwhile the quadratus lumborum runs from the bottom of your back to the middle and again is used for bending from side to side.

So if you have a heavy bag pulling on one side, this is going to force you to work those muscles. In the short term this can lead to soreness, but in the long term it could lead to an imbalance if you're prone to regularly keeping the bag on one side. This imbalance could then lead to further back problems in the long term. In the worst case scenarios this could contribute to scoliosis – a condition in which the spine is curved sideways.

Meanwhile being heavier on one side will make it harder for you to walk with the optimal gait. You may place one foot down harder, which could put more strain on one knee and/or one hip. More so, having a strap that digs into your muscle (the traps which poke up either side of the neck) can also cause both acute and chronic pain in the long term. Your muscles are off balance. Since all of the weight of your bag is on one shoulder, you're carrying an asymmetric load, which throws off your posture. Most people tend to carry purses on their side of dominance — if you're right-handed, you'll hang it over your right shoulder. But this causes the muscles in your dominant shoulder, particularly the trapezius muscle, to become bigger.

How to Mitigate Damage

So neither a shoulder bag nor a backpack is perfect. Sadly though most of us don't have the option to go into work without our bags. Whether a backpack is used by a hiker, a traveller or a schoolchild, it should fit the person, be worn on both shoulders and not be used to carry too much weight. An overloaded backpack not only puts too much pressure on the shoulder, it disperses extra weight on the hip, knee,ankle and most especially, you back.

Instead then we should look for compromises that can help us to reduce the amount of stress bags are causing.

• Carry a bag in your hand – Although this might seem like the most effort in the short term, it is actually by far the healthiest in the long term. Now you'll be working your arm mostly which won't alter your posture. If you are buying a new shoulder bag, get one with a handle so that you can at least give your back occasional breaks.

• Use a fanny pack/bum bag – I'm going to struggle to convince the fashion conscious among you to consider using a fanny pack… still though, if you were to, you would find that it took the strain off of your spine while also forcing you to be more selective with what you chose to carry.

• Keep it light – If you are carrying around huge empty water bottles, books that you never read, heavy laptops and spare shoes… then you are putting serious bad strain on your posture. Every now and then it's good to have a clear out – and to make sensible choices when it comes to the things that you probably don't really need. If you haven't used it in the last week it can go. People who don't carry bags survive without these things, so can you! Oh and don't make the mistake of thinking that small things don't matter as it all adds up pretty quickly… This study recommends keeping it below 10% of your bodyweight where possible.

• Use big straps – Larger straps spread the pressure evenly across your muscles thereby reducinthe strain and preventing the cutting. Using two straps is also a good idea.

• Use the right position – If you must carry a shoulder bag, then keep it low down (long straps) and closer to your body.

• Swap sides – Finally if you're carrying a shoulder bag, then make sure to switch sides regularly and to attempt to spend about even time on each side.

CHAPTER 7
SLEEP AT LEAST SIX HOURS

Sleep at least 6 hours

According to a recent study in Pain magazine, sleeping less than six hours in a night or more than nine hours a night, is associated with reporting worse pain the following day. Poor sleep, even for one night can make your pain worse. It can increase your inflammation level. Inflammation is a cause of pain. A study found that people who didn't sleep enough had overactive immune systems — meaning they were generating too much inflammation — and it either caused pain or made their existing pain worse. Lack of sleep is considered a predictor of widespread pain.

Inflammation is linked to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, arthritis, and premature aging. Research indicates that people who get sleep lesser than six hours a night have higher blood levels of inflammatory proteins than those who get more.

A 2010 study found that C-reactive protein, which is associated with heart attack risk, was higher in people who got six or fewer hours of sleep a night. People who have sleep apnea or insomnia can have an improvement in blood pressure and inflammation with treatment of the sleep disorders.

Too little sleep can even block your natural pain relievers in your body.

Getting Enough Sleep Equals Less Pain: If you have chronic pain -- or acute pain from a recent injury -- getting enough sleep may actually make you hurt less. Many studies have shown a link between sleep loss and lower pain threshold. Unfortunately, being in pain can make it hard to sleep.

Researchers have found that getting good sleep can supplement medication for pain. The study included 18 healthy adults aged 21 to 35 who did not have any pain. Half spent 10 hours in bed for four nights, and the others kept to their usual nighttime bed schedules. People in the extended sleep group raked in close to two hours more sleep per night due to their new bedtime ritual, an average of 8.9 hours per night vs. 7.14 hours per night among those who kept their own schedule.

The researchers measured pain by how long participants could keep a finger held to a heat source. The amount increased by 25% in those in the extended sleep group after just four days. Previous research suggests this is comparable to taking a 60-mg dose twice a day of the painkiller codeine.

Side Sleeping Is Best For Reducing Lower Back Pain

If you are prone to lower back pain, nothing beats the side sleeping position. It is also good for a lot of people with hip pain. If you are a back sleeper, know that it is not ideal. But you could manage to keep the neutral curvature of the spine with the help of some pillows. Sleeping on your stomach, however, is a strict no-no. You are likely to have fitful restless sleep as you struggle with neck and lower back strain. This position causes you to strain the neck and compresses both muscles and nerves in the area, bringing on further pain and tightness.

Place Pillows Strategically For Optimal Support While Sleeping

Whether you're using a combination of regular pillows to provide added support or relying on ergonomic or cervical pillows, here is how you should place them: Lie down on your side and bring your legs in the direction your chest at a bit of an angle. Place a pillow between your knees to take the pressure off your back and also keep the spine itself from rotating. A full body pillow may also be good for you.

Look Beyond Sleep Time and Position: Other Sleeping Tips To Reduce Back Pain

Use these tips to help yourself get a better night's rest and ease some of the back pain you've been experiencing by sleeping wrongly.

Get a good mattress that eases the pain you experience. Take time to test and try out different mattresses until you find one that reduces your back pain. Firm mattresses come recommended for those who have back pain, but some people actually find a softer option works for them – so, listen to your body.

Use the right pillows correctly: We've said this already but can't say it enough!

Flip mattresses regularly: Flip your mattress over and around every few months to keep the load on it even and the wear and tear balanced.

Don't put off replacing worn pillows and mattresses: If you feels bumps, lumps, or even the springs in your mattress or find you can only sleep on some sections of it comfortably, it may be time for a change. Most mattresses do fine for 5 to 7 years after which they need to be replaced. Replace pillows before they feel completely worn down. Wash it every 6 months or so to keep it in good condition. About 12 to 24 months is a good average life for a pillow.

Get out of bed carefully: Rise slowly and gently, rolling to one side first and then pushing up slowly with the hands as you swing your legs to the side of the bed and onto the ground. Never bend at the waist because this strains the back as you get off the bed.

CHAPTER 8

STRETCH DAILY- IT KEEPS YOUR MUSCLES SUPPLE.

Stretching is wonderful. It can be done where ever you are, it requires no special equipment. Stretching can be done standing or sitting.

Stretches for Low Back Pain

Back Flexion Stretch.

Lying on the back, pull both knees to the chest while simultaneously flexing the head forward until a comfortable stretch is felt across the mid and low back.

Knee to Chest Stretch.

Lie on the back with the knees bent and both heels on the floor, then place both hands behind one knee and pull it toward the chest, stretching the gluteus and piriformis muscles in the buttock.

Kneeling Lunge Stretch.

Starting on both knees, move one leg forward so the foot is flat on the ground, keeping weight evenly distributed through both hips (rather than on one side or the other). Place both hands on the top of the thigh, and gently lean the body forward to feel a stretch in the front of the other leg. This stretch affects the hip flexor muscles, which attach to the pelvis and can impact posture if too tight.

Piriformis Muscle Stretch.

Lie on the back with knees bent and both heels on the floor. Cross one leg over the other, resting the ankle on the bent knee, then gently pull the bottom knee toward the chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock. Or, lying on the floor, cross one leg over the other and pull it forward over the body at the knee, keeping the other leg flat.

Seated Hamstring Stretch

While seated, rest your heel on the floor with your knee straight.

Gently lean forward until a stretch is felt behind your knee/thigh.

You should keep your low back straight to focus the stretch on the hamstring muscles.

Hold the stretch for 20-30 seconds, then repeat 3-4 times on each leg.

Standing Hamstring Stretch.

While standing, bend forward at the waist with arms hanging down toward the ground and with legs straight, without locking the knees. Try to touch the toes but do not strain to do so. Stop bending forward when a slight pulling sensation is felt in the hamstring. This form of exercise is not always recommended as it may be difficult to do, and even exacerbate pain from a lumbar herniated disc, spondylolisthesis or other specific conditions.

Chair Hamstring Stretch.

Sitting on a chair, place one leg straight out on another chair in front of the body. Reach toward the toes and stretch one leg at a time.

Towel Hamstring Stretch.

While lying on the back, hold each end of a rolled-up towel and wrap it behind the foot. Then pull the leg up in front of the body to feel a slight stretch in the hamstring muscle.

Wall Hamstring Stretch.

Lie on the floor, with the buttocks against a wall and the legs stretched up against the wall. Try to push the knee as straight as possible. This stretch is usually gentle on the lower back, as it places minimal stress on the low back and the body is supported while lying down.

Hamstring stretches have been shown to be most effective when done for a duration of 30 to 60 seconds.3 Stretching should be done twice daily and on a regular basis. It can be easier to remember to do the stretches if they are incorporated into a daily routine, such as when getting up every morning and going to bed each night.