

# Dr. Colin Gage

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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Why Do Back *Stretching* Exercises?

### **Shortened Muscles Cause Back Pain:**

Shortened muscles can throw the spine out of alignment and cause back pain. Stretching exercises lengthens shortened muscles and relieves back pain. Tight back muscles, tight buttocks muscles, and even tight hamstrings (front of thigh muscles) or quadriceps (front of thigh muscles), can affect the alignment of the spine. Stretching the back with stretching exercises also increases mobility of the joints of the spine.

**Stretching** exercises may be done daily and may take a few weeks to notice results. It is important to always do some warm-up exercises before attempting any stretching exercises. Five minutes of walking, exercise bike, elliptical trainer, or even marching on the spot is enough. Not warming up before stretching leaves your back susceptible to injuries causing back pain. Warm muscles are more flexible than cold muscles and are less likely to be injured.

To prevent back pain, keep your back fit by doing the following stretching exercises. Start with five repetitions of each exercise. If you can handle five repetitions without post exercise pain, then slowly add a couple of repetitions each week until you reach 15 repetitions. If you are experiencing back pain or suffer from a back condition, ask your chiropractic doctor if the following exercises are appropriate for you to do.

### **Pelvic Tilt:** *lower back stretching exercise*

Lie on back, knees bent, feet flat on floor. Tighten buttocks and abdomen, flattening small of back against the floor. Hold for a count of five. Slowly relax. Repeat five - fifteen times.

### **Knee to Chest:** *Gluteal stretching exercise*

Lie on back, knees bent, feet flat on floor. Grasp left leg behind the knee and pull knee towards left shoulder. Hold for a count of five. Switch sides. Repeat 5 times.

### **Basic Twist:** *back stretching exercise*

Lie on back, arms stretched out to the sides.

Bend knees and bring knees up close to your chest

Take a deep breath

Exhale as you slowly lower knees (keep knees together) to floor to the right or as close to the floor as is comfortable.

Pause.

Inhale as you slowly return your knees to chest.

Exhale as you slowly lower knees to left side

Inhale as you return your knees to chest.

Repeat about 5 times.

**The Cat:** *back stretching exercises*

Begin on all fours, hands directly under your shoulders and knees directly under your hips.

Inhale as you drop tummy towards the floor and look up over your head.

Exhale as you bring your tummy back up, rounding your back as you tuck your chin in and tuck your tailbone in. Move slowly back and forth between these two positions

pausing on each pose.

Repeat about 5 times.

**The Cobra:** *back stretching exercises*

Lay flat on stomach, forehead to ground, with arms bent and palms down on the ground under the shoulders. Push downward with arms as you raise your upper torso and arch your back.

Hold for 3 full breaths before slowly bringing the upper torso back down to the ground.

**Hamstring (back of thigh) Stretch:** *stretching exercise*

Lying flat on back. Raise left leg up. Grab leg and pull up further until you feel a gentle pull in the hamstring Hold for 10 - 20 seconds. Switch sides. Repeat.

Shortened quadriceps can contribute to sway back

**Quadriceps (front of thigh) Stretch:** *stretching exercise*

Stand up. Bend your knee behind you, grab your ankle and gently pull your heel toward you buttocks until you feel a gentle pull on the front of your thigh. Hold for 10 - 20 seconds. Switch sides. Repeat. Be sure to hold onto something with your free hand so you don't fall over.

**Remember, if any of these exercises cause pain, stop and see Dr. Gage or Dr. Bortolon at Nicola Valley Chiropractic before attempting them again. Any questions? Feel free to contact them directly for a more in depth explanation.**