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

Exercises to Safeguard Your Back

As I always try to point out, preventing your back pain from happening in the first place is the best way to treat it. By seeing your chiropractor regularly, exercising three to five days per week, and maintaining a healthy body weight, you will be much less likely to experience a bout of back pain. To help you achieve this, try the following exercises:

Hamstring Stretch

Lie on your back with both legs straight. Extend one leg straight up in the air. Loop a towel over the arch of the lifted foot, and gently pull on the towel as you push against it with your foot until a stretch is felt in the back of the thigh. Hold 30 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times on each side.

Piriformis Stretch

The piriformis muscle runs through the buttock and can contribute to back and leg pain. To stretch this muscle, lie on the back and pull the right knee across towards the opposite shoulder until a stretch is felt in the buttock area. Hold 30 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times. Then do the same for the opposite side.

Back Stretch

Lie on your stomach. Use your arms to push your chest and upper body off the floor while your legs and pelvis remain on the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Let your back relax and sag. Repeat 10 times.

Leg Raises

Lie on your stomach. Tighten the muscles in one leg and raise it from the floor. Hold your leg up 18 inches or so for a count of 10 and return it to the floor. Do the same with the other leg. Repeat 5 times with each leg.

Bridges

Lie on your back with your knees flexed and your feet flat on the floor. Keep the knees together. Tighten the muscles of the lower abdomen and buttocks so as to flatten your lower back against the floor. Slowly raise your hips up from the floor and hold for a slow count of 10. Repeat this exercise 3 times. If you cannot raise your hips from the floor, merely tighten the belly, the abdominal and buttock muscles, and wait until you can raise the hips.

The Pointer

Kneel on mat on hands and knees, with palms directly under shoulders and knees hip-width apart. Slowly raise right arm, and extend it forward parallel to floor. (Balance by contracting your abdominal muscles.) Keep right palm parallel to the floor, then lift the left leg, and straighten it behind you. Hold opposing limbs off the ground for 30 to 60 seconds without arching your back. Switch sides. Repeat 3 to 6 times.

Stretching Tips

To get the maximum benefit from stretching, proper technique is essential.

- Warm up your muscles before stretching by walking or doing other gentle movements for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Slowly increase your stretch as you feel your muscles relax. Don't bounce.
- Stretch slowly and gently only to the point of mild tension, not to the point of pain.
- Don't hold your breath. Inhale deeply before each stretch and exhale during the stretch.
- As your flexibility increases, consider increasing the number of repetitions.
- Stop immediately if you feel any severe pain.