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

An Exercise Ball Can Lower Your Risk of Low Back Pain

Unfortunately, I only have a handful of patients in my office that have really good strength in their abdominal, low back, and “core” muscles. When these muscles become fatigued or weak, the likelihood of a low back injury occurring is increased significantly. A simple and inexpensive piece of exercise equipment that can be purchased in various locations in your community can help strengthen these muscles, thus lowering your risk of low back pain. It is an inflatable “exercise ball”.

The exercise ball - also called a Swiss ball - is a conservative treatment option for back pain sufferers and is designed to help prevent further episodes of low back pain as part of a rehabilitation program. The exercise ball is effective in rehabilitation of the back because it helps strengthen and develop the core body muscles that help to stabilize the spine.

With the exercise ball, an element of instability is introduced to the exercise that one would not normally get in a floor exercise. The body responds naturally and automatically to this instability to keep balanced on the exercise ball. Over time, the muscles used to keep in balance on the Swiss ball become stronger. In essence, individuals build strength in important back muscles and abdominal muscles without knowing it.

The exercise ball also uses what is called “proprioception,” an awareness of where one’s hand, or foot, is in relationship to the rest of your body without having to see or think about it. The instability of the exercise ball provides the body with constant opportunities to evaluate its orientation in space or position, developing and training the body’s natural awareness. Enhanced proprioception provides the body with increased balance and stability.

In addition, it is theorized that the type of spinal movement induced by using the exercise ball (small range, adjustment of balance) may help reduce pain by stimulating the body to produce increased amounts of natural pain inhibitors.

The benefits of physio ball exercise for people with low back pain include:

- Simple and versatile way to start moving again after back pain episode

- Improved core muscle strength
- Greater flexibility and range of motion of the spine
- Enhanced balance and coordination of core muscle groups used to stabilize the spine and control proper posture while using the exercise ball
- Increased tendency to maintain a neutral spine position during exercise

For more information on how to use an exercise ball correctly, consult your chiropractor or certified personal trainer.