

Dr. Colin Gage

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
2076A Granite Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1B8

Ph: (250) 378-5456
Fax: (250) 378-8259
Email: info@merrittchiro.com
Website: www.merrittchiro.com

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

Exercises to Safeguard Your Back

Once a patient has had his or her back problem addressed properly through chiropractic care, it is imperative that regular exercise becomes a part of their overall lifestyle. The definition of insanity is "to do the same thing over and over and expect a different result". Similarly, if you maintain the same old inactive lifestyle, you can't expect your back pain to not reoccur. Therefore, I have listed some simple back exercises that you can do at home with virtually no equipment.

Hamstring Stretch

Lie on your back with both legs straight and on the floor. 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 cross one leg over the other; gently pull the knee toward the opposite side chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock area. Hold 30 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times.

Back Stretch

Lie on your stomach. Use your arms to push your upper body off 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 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 bent 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.

The Cardio Component

Engaging in cardiovascular exercise can help aid in rehabilitation of the spine and help prevent future injury. Most health care professionals recommend 20 to 30 minutes of cardio exercise three to four days per week to improve cardiovascular endurance and help lose weight. Until you've recovered from back pain, select low-impact activities that burn calories, but won't place undue stress on your joints. Consider alternating cardio exercise and strength training to get the most from your workouts and to allow your muscles time to recover.

Stretching Tips

To get the maximum benefit from stretching, proper technique is essential. To accomplish this, I usually give the following tips:

- 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.