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Avoid pain-in-the-back exercises



If you have low back pain, stay active but cautious. Many common exercises greatly stress the lower back. Avoid, minimize, or modify them while your back heals. Consult a Certified Fitness Instructor and a physiotherapist to design your back-strengthening exercise program.

Hyperextending the spine (bending backward) puts unnecessary stress on the

low back. Maintain a pelvic tuck when doing standing exercises and keep your knees slightly flexed to minimize low-back stress.

When doing most abdominal exercises, keep your legs bent at the knees and concentrate on pushing your lower back into the floor (the stress falls off the abdominal muscles and onto your lower back when you keep your legs straight or arch your back).

Waist-twisting exercises, incorrectly done, also aggravate the low back. Correctly done, twists involve very short ranges of motion, not full turning at the waist. However, even short-range twists aren't recommended for some. Side bends may also be unwise for some back problems, especially if holding onto hand weights. Check with your physiotherapist.

Seated exercises combined with lifting a weight over the head may compress the spinal discs (especially if the weight is heavy) and may aggravate a low back problem. Instead, stand up when pressing a weight overhead. This allows the legs to bear some

of the pressure otherwise condensed in the spine. You can also stand with your lower back pressed against a wall to avoid over-arching the back.

When doing the bench press or a push-up (chest exercises), be aware of maintaining the natural curve of your spine. Rest your feet on the bench to help avoid over-arching the low back when doing the bench press. And doing push-ups off the knees instead of the toes may also help maintain a straight back.

Until your back is stronger, avoid or modify these common weight-training back exercises: the bent-over barbell row, the T-bar row, the good-morning exercise, the deadlift, and the back extension.

Poor technique in the seated row exercise also puts considerable stress on the low back. Avoid continually bending forward and backward from the waist when doing this exercise. Maintain an upright posture (knees relaxed) and move only the arms, feel your arms and upper back muscles doing the pulling.

The squat is a lower-body exercise that may irritate a back problem, especially if improperly done. However, it can be modified to lessen the stress on the lower back.

Brisk walking, instead of jogging, minimizes stress on the lower back. Use flat terrain, on the treadmill, too: inclines and declines put more stress on the lower back. When step-training or using a stair machine, maintain erect posture – avoid stooping over.

Stretch after your workout or activity. This is the time to coax your muscles to relax, which may help you avoid tense, injury-prone muscles. Stretch your lower back and the backs of your thighs. Tight hamstrings can also contribute to low back problems.

Regular, gentle to moderate activity is the best way to avoid or recuperate from injury. Get moving!

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