

Exercises for better back care

General Instructions

Your best back support is derived from your own back muscles! Faithful performance of back exercises often avoids the necessity of an external brace or corset. Back muscles can give you all the support needed if you strengthen them by routine performance of prescribed exercises.

Exercises

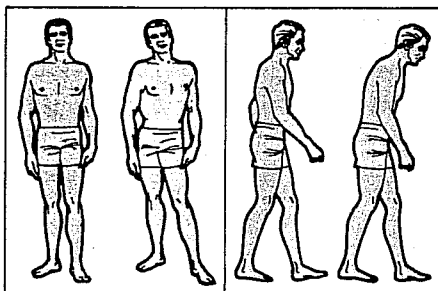
Follow the exercise routine prescribed by your doctor. Gradually increase the frequency of your exercises as your condition improves, but stop when fatigued. If your muscles are tight, take a warm shower or tub bath before performing your back exercises. Do not be alarmed if you have mild aching after performing exercises. This should diminish as your muscles become stronger.

Exercise on a rug or mat. Put a small pillow under your neck. Wear loose clothing; no shoes. Stop doing any exercise that causes pain until you have checked with your doctor.

Additional Instructions

Helpful hints for a healthy back

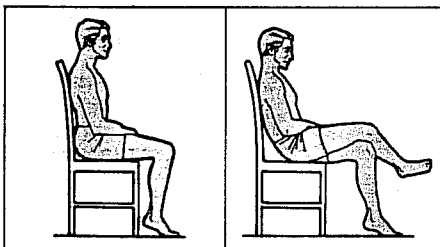
Standing and walking



Correct Incorrect Correct Incorrect

Try to toe straight ahead when walking; put most of your weight on your heels; hold your chest forward and elevate the front of the pelvis as if walking up an incline. Avoid wearing high heels. Stand as if you are trying to touch the ceiling with the top of your head, eyes straight ahead. All the elements of good posture will flow from these simple maneuvers.

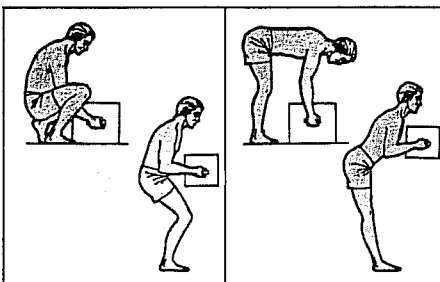
Sitting



Correct Incorrect

Sit in a hard-back chair with spine pushed back; try to eliminate the hollow in the lower back. If possible, elevate the knees higher than hips while sitting in an automobile. Secretaries should adjust posture chairs accordingly. Sit all the way back in the chair with your back erect.

Lifting



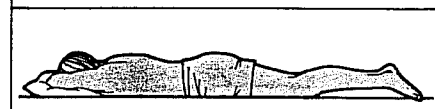
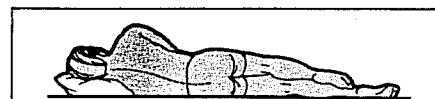
Correct Incorrect

Bend your knees; squat and lift with your thigh muscles, not your back. Never bend over with your knees straight and lift with the upper torso.

Move slowly and avoid sudden movements. Try to avoid lifting loads in front of you above the waist line. Avoid bending over to lift heavy objects from car trunks, as this places a strain on low back muscles.

Sleeping

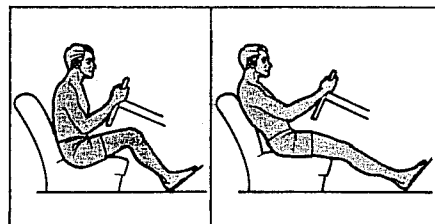
Correct



Incorrect

Sleep on a firm mattress; a 3/4 inch plywood bed board is helpful and should be used with all but a very firm orthopedic mattress. With acute back pain, sleep with a pillow or blanket rolled under the knees and a pillow under the head. Keep your knees and hips bent when sleeping on your side.

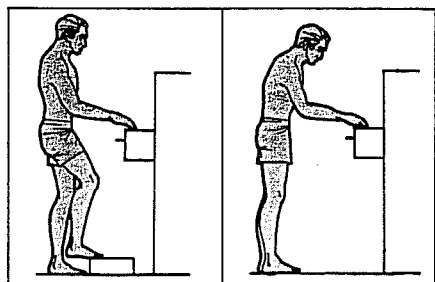
Driving



Correct Incorrect

Use a firm seat with a padded plywood or special seat support. Sit close to the wheel with knees bent. On long trips, stop every one to two hours and walk to relieve tension and relax muscles.

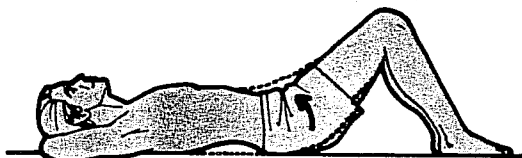
Working



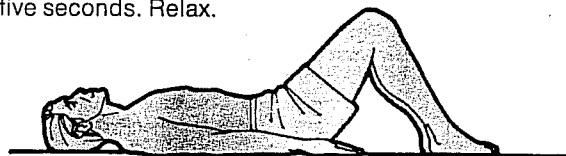
Correct Incorrect

Try to avoid fatigue caused by work requiring long standing. Flex hips and knees by occasionally placing a foot on a stool or bench. Take exercise breaks from desk work by getting up, moving around and performing a few back exercises in the standing position.

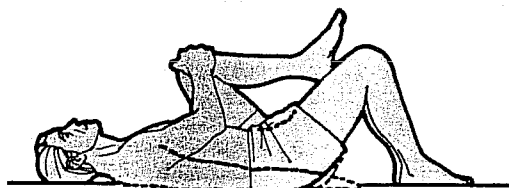
1.



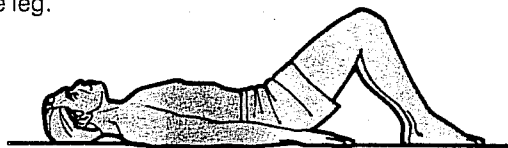
Lie on your back with knees bent and hands clasped behind neck. Feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath and relax. Press the small of your back against the floor and tighten your stomach and buttock muscles. This should cause the lower end of the pelvis to rotate forward and flatten your back against the floor. Hold for five seconds. Relax.



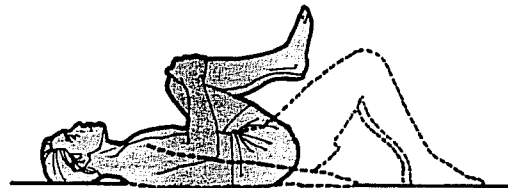
2.



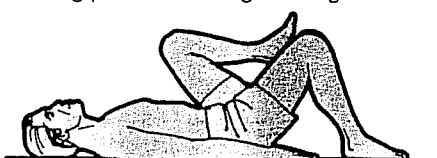
Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath and relax. Grasp one knee with both hands and pull as close to your chest as possible. Return to starting position. Straighten leg. Return to starting position. Repeat with alternate leg.



3.



Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet on the floor. Take a deep breath and relax. Grasp both knees and pull them as close to your chest as possible. Hold for three seconds, then return to starting position. Straighten legs and relax.



4.



Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath and relax. Draw one knee to chest. Then point leg upward as far as possible. Return to starting position. Relax. Repeat with alternate leg.

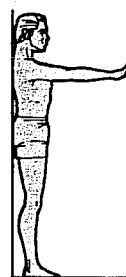
NOTE: This exercise is useful in stretching tight hamstring muscles, but is not recommended for patients with sciatic pain associated with a herniated disc.

5.



a. Lie on your stomach with hands clasped behind back. Pull shoulders back and down by pushing hands downward towards feet, pinching shoulder blades together, and lift head from floor. Take a deep breath. Hold for two seconds. Relax.

b. Stand erect. With one hand grasp the thumb of other hand behind the back, then pull downwards toward the floor; stand on toes and look at the ceiling while exerting the downward pull. Hold momentarily, then relax. Repeat 10 times at intervals of two hours during the working day. Take an exercise break instead of a coffee break!

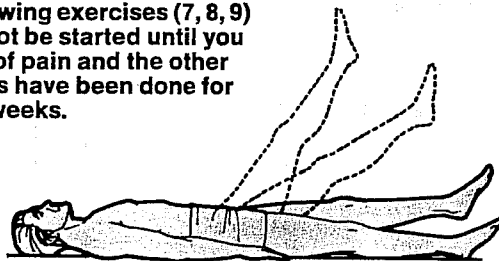


6. Stand with your back against doorway. Place heels four inches away from frame. Take a deep breath and relax. Press the small of your back against doorway. Tighten your stomach and buttock muscles, allowing your knees to bend slightly. This should cause the lower end of the pelvis to rotate

forward (as in Exercise 1). Press your neck up against doorway. Press both hands against opposite side of doorway and straighten both knees. Hold for two seconds. Relax.

The following exercises (7, 8, 9) should not be started until you are free of pain and the other exercises have been done for several weeks.

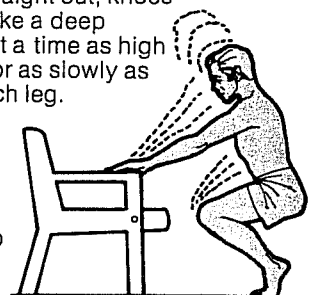
7.



Lie on your back with your legs straight out, knees unbent and arms at your sides. Take a deep breath and relax. Raise legs one at a time as high as is comfortable and lower to floor as slowly as possible. Repeat five times for each leg.

8.

May be done holding onto a chair or table. After squatting, flex head forward, bounce up and down two or three times, then assume erect position.



9.

Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on floor. Take a deep breath and relax. Pull up to a sitting position keeping knees bent. Return to starting position. Relax. Having someone hold your feet down facilitates this exercise.

