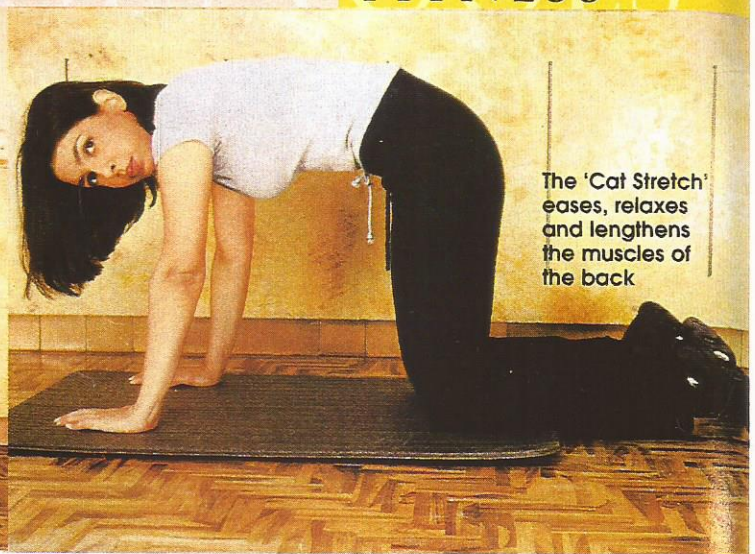




The 'Good Morning' is a fabulous back strengthening exercise done with weights



The 'Cat Stretch' eases, relaxes and lengthens the muscles of the back

BACK PAIN CURES!

Exercise can help cure lower back pain better than any medication or surgery, says Nawaz Modi Singhanian

MANY of the millions of people who are victims of lower back pain don't realise that exercise is the best and the most potent medicine available to treat a back problem —

better than painkillers or surgery.

The fact is, as little as eight to 10 minutes of exercise a day, for a couple of weeks, will do the trick for most people. If you have consulted your doctor about your back problem, you may have received some exercise advice already.

Causes Of Back Pain

Bad posture:

The lower back is a site of frequent problems caused by congenital abnormalities, poor posture, postural deviations and poor body mechanics such as incorrect sitting and lifting postures. All of these conditions can be remedied through exercise.

Sudden, violent twisting movements may injure the ligaments and the muscles of the back. Lack of trunk flexibility and weak abdominal muscles also contribute to lower back pain.

Incorrect posture or faulty body mechanics put a tremendous strain on the muscles and

ligaments of the low back.

Lifting heavy objects in the wrong manner — using the back instead of the legs — and not bending the legs but just bending over instead — is an example of poor body mechanics that must be corrected in order to maintain a healthy back.

Smoking:

Aside from the negative impact on your heart and lungs, smoking damages the discs of the spine too, through its effect on the blood circulation. Nicotine and other components of cigarette smoke compromise the network of tiny blood vessels throughout the body that feeds all the tissues, including the intervertebral discs.

Surveys have identified cigarette smoke as one of the major risk factors for back pain.

Alcohol:

Like smoking, alcohol also constricts the blood vessels and can contribute to poor circulation around the discs. Moderate drinking contributes very little to disc degeneration, but alcohol abuse can lead to severe consequences.

How Exercise Can Help Your Back

Exercise strengthens and stretches the four basic sets of muscles that support the spine. The abdominal muscles are responsible for contributing towards good posture, in

maintaining proper vertebral alignment and thereby protecting the back. The abdominals assist the extensor muscles of the back, which run the length of the spine to maintain proper alignment of the vertebrae.

Trunk flexibility must be emphasised to maintain maximum range of motion in the back. The hip and butt muscles help support and govern the position of your back while you sit, stand, walk around and even lie down.

As far as exercise goes, for back sufferers, it is said that the slower, the better. Vigorous and jerky movements are self-defeating. Make sure to do exercise with the advice of your medical practitioner.

It's best to work out with the exercises that best suit your needs, in conjunction with your doctor and physical trainer, depending on the location, type, severity and duration of your back pain. There may be certain restrictions imposed upon you by your personal medical history.

your right hand. Swing yourself upright while taking your legs off the bed and setting your feet on the floor. Now, keeping your back straight, stand up.

Standing

As your mother probably told you, stand straight and don't slouch! Keep your stomach and butt tucked in, and the rest of your body will tend to follow suit. Your abdominals give the lower back adequate support when they are in this tucked-in position.

The importance of good posture cannot be over-emphasised as a way to speed up the recovery from lower back pain, and as a means of preventing future bouts.

Sitting

More important than the chair you sit on, is the amount of time that you spend sitting. Sitting provides the maximum amount of back aggravation, more than standing or lying down, you might want to limit the amount of

Exercise strengthens and stretches the four basic sets of muscles that support the spine. Stretching exercises will relieve spasms, pain and strain on the back

Stretching exercises will relieve spasms, pain and strain on the back. Strengthening exercises must be added once the acute symptoms of back pain have subsided.

Listen to your body. Don't risk injury by pushing through pain. Your exercise choices should match your level of fitness, age, time schedule and comfort levels.

Correct Positioning

The chair you sit in, the bed you sleep on, the position you sit, stand and walk in, all collectively affect the back. It's important to choose and assume the best positions for these and other daily activities.

Getting Out Of Bed

Getting out of bed incorrectly can actually aggravate the back problem.

The right way is to sidle over to the edge of the bed, while lying on your side with your knees bent, facing the edge.

If you're lying on your left side, place your right hand on the mattress in front of you, and in one fluid motion, push down with

time you spend in this position.

Whenever possible, try and take a break from your chair by standing up to stretch or walk around.

Common sitting habits that could cause you grief include slouching in your seat, leaning too far back, and crossing your legs.

Instead, try resting your feet on a foot bar to help you sit tall and keep the pressure off the back of your thighs.

Your chair should give you a firm back and bottom support so as to avoid any strain or discomfort. Make sure your feet rest well on the floor while sitting, and your knees do not bend more than at right angles.

Multiple studies have shown that even when people get back on their feet because of exercise, they tend to abandon the programme shortly after recovery, probably out of a sense of false security.

Unfortunately, statistics proves them wrong. Dropping the exercise programme is an invitation for the pain and spasms to return; and they often return with a vengeance.

Be smart, and play it safe.