

Exercises

Performing exercises designed specifically for your back and neck can be very beneficial. Exercises can help you recover from a back or neck injury. Exercises also strengthen your back and neck muscles and can help prevent future injury.

Talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

GENERAL RULES FOR EXERCISE

Do each exercise slowly. Do each exercise 2 times a day. Start with 5 repetitions of each exercise and work up to 10 reps. If an exercise increases your pain after 5 reps, discontinue. Exercise every day.

Modified sit up:



Strong abdominal muscles protect your back! Slowly raise your shoulders off the ground while keeping your chin tucked. Touch your fingertips to your knees and hold for the count of five. Do not arch your back.

Hamstring stretch:

The hamstring muscle runs from the hip down the back of your thigh to your knee. This exercise is designed to give your back and hip additional flexibility. The hamstring exercise can be done lying or standing.

Lying hamstring stretch:

Lie on your back with knees bent so your feet are flat on the floor. Raise your leg slowly by clasping your hands around the back of the knee to support the lower thigh.



Standing hamstring stretch:

Stand with one leg propped on a table or the back of a chair. Bend the leg you are standing on until you feel a mild stretch under the thigh of the leg on the chair. Hold for a count of three. This may be more difficult, but will give you some variety.



Sitting hamstring stretch:



Sit on the floor with one leg bent and the other almost straight. Lean forward slowly over the bent leg until you feel a mild stretch under the other thigh.

Straight leg raise:

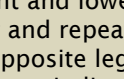


Not only will this strengthen your legs, it will also strengthen your abdominal muscles. Lie on your back with one knee bent so your foot is flat on the floor with the other leg straight. Slowly raise the straight leg eight inches off the floor. Hold for five seconds, then slowly lower your leg and relax. Do five repetitions and change legs.



Leg lifts:

Lie on your side with your bottom leg bent slightly under you. Place your top arm in front of you on the floor for support. Align your shoulders and hips. Slowly raise your upper leg until it is above shoulder height and lower slowly. Repeat five times. Turn over and repeat on the other side with the opposite leg. Make sure your shoulders stay in line with your hips.



Extension Stretching:

This is particularly good if you have been sitting or in a bent over position for a long time. Simply stand, bend your knees slightly, place your hands on the back of your waist and stretch backward while looking at the ceiling. Hold for a count of five and then slowly stand up. Repeat often during the day.



Low back stretch:

This exercise is similar to the knee-to-chest stretch and will accomplish the same thing, but in a standing position. Don't try this unless you are confident of your balance. Slowly bring one knee toward your chest and grasp it with your hands. Hold for a count of three. Change feet. This allows the low back muscles to stretch and will help them relax.



Calf stretches:

Lean against a table or a wall with your hands at a comfortable height. Place your feet in a diagonal stance. Bend your forward knee as you place your weight on the back leg and press your foot flat on the floor. You should feel your calf muscle stretch. Hold this position for a count of five. Repeat five times.



Neck stretches:

Gently move your chin in a "yes" motion. Nod your head slowly bringing your chin toward your chest. Repeat five times.



Saying "no"

will also stretch those stubborn, tight neck and shoulder muscles. Simply turn your head from side to side very slowly until you can turn enough to put your chin in line with your shoulder. Repeat five times.



Try "maybe."

Tilt your head slowly from side to side. Your ear should be directly over your shoulder. Do this stretching to increase flexibility.



Shoulder rolls:

Shoulder rolls are also going to increase your flexibility. Roll your shoulders forward, then backward in a circle. Do the exercise for 10-15 seconds to begin. Start with little circles and progress to large circles. This should be done several times during the day to relax your shoulder muscles as well as your neck muscles.




Texas Back Institute™