

Exercises for back pain

Exercise is commonly advised as one of the **best** ways to help prevent and manage most back pain. The type of exercise you do does not matter as long as you do something and remain **active**. Some people find that swimming helps them, others swear by yoga, while many people enjoy walking or running. The **choice** of exercise is yours because if you **enjoy** what you are doing, you will be more likely to continue and see the **benefits**.

Common exercises beneficial for back pain

- Swimming – the water environment takes the strain off joints and muscles while working out the **entire** body
- Yoga – strengthens **core** and back muscles and increases flexibility
- Pilates – strengthens muscles and the spinal column and promotes good **posture**
- Exercise programmes – provide a cardiovascular work out and all over body **conditioning** which includes the back and core muscles.

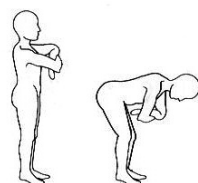


There are **many** other exercises that you could do which would be helpful. Although structured exercises are extremely beneficial, there are also some exercises you can do on your own at **home** without specialist equipment that can help to strengthen your back and prevent and ease back pain. If you find that any of the exercises exacerbates your back pain, try another one or seek advice from your GP or health professional. You should, however, expect some minor discomfort after starting an exercise programme, since your body may not be used to exercise.

Useful exercises

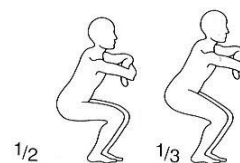
Good morning

- Stand with your feet slightly apart and arms folded in front of your chest
- Bend your knees a little and bend your hips to get your back flat and parallel to the ground while sticking your bottom out
- Breathe out on the way down, in on the way up
- Repeat 10 times.



Half or one third squats

- Stand with your feet apart and arms folded in front of your chest
- Bend your knees until your thighs are halfway to being parallel with the ground (one third squats) Return to the upright position
- Progress to having your thighs parallel to the ground (half squat) but never deeper
- Breathe out on the way down, in on the way up
- Repeat five times (gradually increase to 10).



Arm and leg raise

- On the floor, on all fours, place your hands shoulder width apart and your knees slightly apart (arms and thighs should be vertical)
- Stretch one arm forward in front while stretching the opposite leg out behind
- Repeat 10 times.



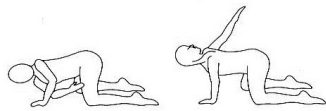
Cat's pose

- Arch the back, at the same time, look down at the floor
- Then lower the stomach towards the floor, hollowing the back while looking up
- (If you are pregnant you should not do the second part of this exercise instead keep your back straight)
- Repeat 10 times.



Arm swings

- While on the floor on all fours raise one hand off the floor and reach underneath your body as far as you can
- On the return, swing the arm out to the side as far as you can, then return to the starting position. Follow the moving hand with the eyes
- Repeat with the other arm
- Repeat 10 times.



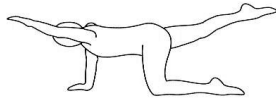
Bent leg side raises

- Position yourself on the floor on all fours
- Swing your bent leg out to the side from your hip then return it the middle
- Repeat 10 times and do the same with the other leg.



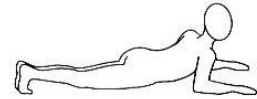
Arm and leg extension

- In an all fours position stretch one arm forward in front, while stretching the opposite leg out behind
- Return your arm and leg to original position
- Repeat 10 times and do the same with the other leg.



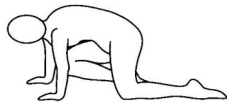
Back arch

- Lying face down on the floor, push up with your arms your hands placed below your shoulders
- Keep your pelvis on the floor and only raise your back
- Repeat 10 times.



Knee Raises

- While in the all fours position draw alternate knees to the opposite elbow
- Return to the original position
- Repeat 10 times and do the same with the other leg.



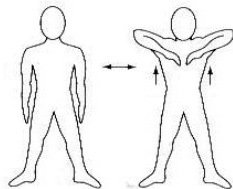
Trunk rotators

- Sitting cross legged, twist your shoulders around and place your right hand on the floor behind you
- Place your left arm outside of your right knee and twist towards the right holding for five seconds, using your left arm as a lever against the knee
- Repeat five times (each side).



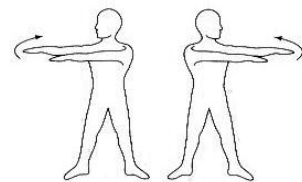
Upright rowing

- Standing with your feet hip width apart, arms at your sides, bring your hands up to just below your chin
- At the same time bringing your elbows up as far as possible to the side of the head
- Return your arms to your sides breathing in on the way up, out on the way down
- Repeat 10 times.



Head, arms and trunk rotation

- Start with feet hip width apart, hands and arms reaching directly forward at shoulder level
- Turn your head, arms and shoulders around to the left as far as you can go, bending the right arm across the chest, keeping your hips still
- Repeat to the right
- Repeat 10 times.



For more information on exercises to help alleviate back pain contact BackCare or visit www.backcare.org.uk