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Strong Lower Backs: Having One That Works

You never know until you hurt it how much you use your lower back all day long. When your lower back is injured, every movement becomes painful. Simple actions, such as getting out of a chair or bending over the sink, become excruciating, and your daily routine becomes difficult and frustrating.

Back pain affects 60 to 80 percent of U.S. adults at some time during their lives, and up to 50 percent have back pain within a given year.^{1,2} Some of these problems are easily treated and never return, but in five to ten percent of patients low back pain becomes chronic and the person continues to have recurrences and exacerbations.³

Effective treatment of uncomplicated lower back pain involves treatment in a chiropractor's office and beginning and continuing an exercise program. A recent study conducted by the Medical Research Council, a research organization based in the United Kingdom, has found that patients given a combination of spinal manipulation and exercise experienced greater improvement in back function and greater reduction in pain compared to those treated with spinal manipulation or exercise only.⁴

Most mechanical lower back pain is associated with tight leg muscles and weak abdominal muscles. Leg muscles need to be stretched and abdominal muscles need to be strengthened to avoid recurrences of lower back pain.

People are generally not aware of these relationships. You may know you “should be exercising”, but you may be unaware of the importance of stretching. Also, abdominal strengthening is usually the last thing a person thinks of when he or she thinks of doing exercise.

Exercise is a three-step process: stretching, exercising, and abdominal strengthening. Stretching prepares you for the work of exercise, and is done first — before anything else — gently and gradually. You may be tighter than usual on a particular day. This is not important — you should never try to stretch to where “you think you should be”. Just stretch, making sure to pay attention to what you’re doing. It’s easy to injure a muscle if you’re thinking about something else, or if you’re rushing, trying to squeeze in some stretching before dashing off to the gym.

Abdominal strengthening helps support the lower back. Spinal muscles are not designed to carry your body weight. If your abdominal muscles are weak, then your back muscles will be used to carry your body weight, and eventually you’ll have a lower back injury.

Abdominal strengthening not only helps keep your lower back healthy, but also helps maintain good posture. Postural benefits include an easy, relaxed gait; muscles that are long and supple, rather than short and tight; and an open chest that allows for easy, smooth breathing.

Your body is a machine. Everything’s connected. A lower back problem affects many other areas, ultimately. By making sure to stretch regularly and by including abdominal exercises in your gym routine, you can help ensure having a lower back that works.

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3. *Dwyer AP. Backache and its prevention. Clin Orthop 1987;222:35-43.*
4. *UK BEAM Trial Team. United Kingdom back pain exercise and manipulation (UK BEAM) randomised trial: effectiveness of physical treatments for back pain in primary care. BMJ Online First, Nov. 29, 2004.*

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We Can Help....
Our goal is to stimulate your body's natural healing process.