



Healthy Habits Exercise Series

Week 2: Back

'Back' to Basics

Just like reinforced steel can bear more weight than sheet aluminum, a strong, well-conditioned back can withstand more stress, and protect the spine better.

Conditioning through flexibility and strengthening back exercises helps prevent injury, minimizes the severity of the injury, and can also relieve the pain of many back conditions. Exercises that incorporate the core (abdominal, gluteus, and hip muscles) can provide back pain relief because they provide strong support for the spine, keeping it in alignment and facilitating movements that extend or twist the spine.

Exercises and Stretches for Back Muscles

	<p>Lie on your stomach. Prop yourself up on your elbows extending you back. Start straightening your elbows, further extending your back until a gentle stretch is felt. Hold for 15 seconds. Return to standing position. Repeat 5-10 times.</p>
	<p>Lie facedown on the floor, legs together and straight, arms straight and extended above your head. Keep your head/neck in neutral position. Keeping limbs straight (but not locked), simultaneously lift your arms and legs toward ceiling to form a gentle curve within your body. Hold for a slow 30 counts. Do not hold your breath.</p>
	<p>Place your hands directly under your shoulder with your knees directly under your hips. Simultaneously extend your left arm and right leg while maintaining a flat back and facing downward. Hold for 3 seconds, and repeat with opposite arm and leg. Alternate back and forth for 10-15 repetitions.</p>
	<p>Holding a pair of dumbbells, slightly bend your knees and bend forward until your torso is nearly parallel to the floor, your arms hanging down, palms facing back. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and pull the dumbbells or barbell to your chest. Lower back to start. Do 12 to 15 reps.</p>

Resources: <http://www.spine-health.com/>