

Explaining Rehabilitation Exercises

When to exercise

Exercise and stretching techniques explained below is best performed when you are in the recovery or stabilization phase of your chiropractic care. To start exercise or stretching too soon can also have a negative impact on the spine and for that reason it is important that your spine is well on the healing path before we start stretching and strengthening things that were injured or degenerative.

Proper recovery requires us to do some work on our own at home. This work requires a basic understanding of the types of muscles that need to be conditioned.

There are three types of muscles that support the spine:

- **Extensors** (back and gluteus muscles): used to straighten the back (stand), lift and extend, and move the thighs out away from the body.
- **Flexors** (abdominal and iliopsoas muscles): used to bend and support the spine from the front, they also control the arch of the lumbar (lower) spine and flex and move the thigh in toward the body.
- **Obliques or Rotators** (side muscles/ Core muscles): used to stabilize the spine when upright, they rotate the spine and help maintain proper posture and spinal curvature.

While some of these muscles are used in everyday life, most do not get adequate exercise from daily activities and tend to weaken with age unless they are specifically exercised

Stretching

Any form of inactivity, especially where an injured back is involved, is usually associated with some progressive stiffness. Patients with chronic pain may find it takes weeks or months of stretching to mobilize the spine and soft tissues, but will find that the increase in motion provides meaningful and sustained relief of their back pain.

Stretching exercises should focus on achieving flexibility and elasticity. Additionally, it is important to activate and strengthen muscles not directly involved with the injured area, such as the arms and legs. For example, the hamstring muscles play a role in lower back pain, as it is clear that hamstring tightness limits movement in the pelvis and can place it in a position that increases stress across the low back.

Strengthening

It is thought that re-injury is less likely to occur if back strengthening is accomplished than if mere pain relief is achieved with just stretching. There are two primary forms of exercise for strengthening and/or pain relief that tend to be used for specific conditions. When appropriate, the two forms of physical therapy may also be combined.

- **McKenzie exercises**, in general focuses on extending the spine to reduce pain generated from the disc space. Theoretically, extension may also help reduce a herniated disc and reduce pressure on a nerve root. For patients who are suffering from leg pain due to a herniated disc (e.g. sciatica), extending the spine may help reduce the leg pain by "centralizing" the pain (moving the pain from the leg to the lower back). For most people, back pain is usually more tolerable than leg pain. Sometimes, based on the structured evaluation, flexion exercises are appropriate.
- **Lumbar stabilization exercises** focus on finding the patient's "neutral" spine, or the position that allows the patient to feel most comfortable. The back muscles are then exercised to teach the spine how to stay in this position. Performed on an ongoing basis, these exercises can help keep the back strong and well positioned. Special attention is paid to the extensor muscles of the lower back with resistance exercises.

Low-impact aerobic conditioning

Aerobically fit patients will have fewer episodes of low back pain, and will experience less pain when an episode occurs. Well-conditioned patients are also more likely to maintain their regular routine, whereas patients with chronic low back pain who do not work on aerobic conditioning are likely to gradually lose their ability to perform everyday activities.

Examples of low impact aerobic exercises that many people with back pain can tolerate include:

- **Water therapy** (also called pool therapy or hydrotherapy). For people with a great deal of pain, water therapy provides a gentle form of conditioning as the water alleviates gravity and provides buoyancy as well as mild resistance.
- **Walking**. Many people think that walking as part of their daily routine (e.g. at work or while shopping) is enough. However continuous walking at a sustained pace for a minimum of twenty to thirty minutes is required to provide aerobic conditioning. Having said that, any walking is better than no walking so get off the couch and get on the road to recovery.

For a full list of exercises and pictures please see our website:

www.bangorchiro.co.uk

and speak to Dr. Elphinstone and Dr. Maurice for advice on the most appropriate exercises for your health



Quote for this Month

To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.

The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, nor to worry about the future, but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.

[Buddha](#)

Can we Help?

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Classes are Held at:

Bangor Chiropractic Clinic [Wednesday evenings 6.45pm](#)

Please ask Paula about **availability, bookings** and details for the next available class

www.bangorchiro.co.uk