

Getting to the “Core” of Back Problems



According to recent studies, 70–80% of Americans will experience back pain at some time in their lives. For most people, back pain will resolve with conservative treatment. One of the treatment options available is increasing strength and flexibility in what are referred to as your “core” muscles.

Lower core muscles are the muscles surrounding your trunk and pelvis that stabilize your spine, keep you balanced and help initiate all movement in your body. When these core muscles are weak, back pain is often the result. Other factors that can contribute to poor core strength include bad posture, excess body weight or long periods of sitting or standing. An exercise program designed to strengthen the core muscles can help minimize

back pain. The following guidelines can help you get started. Still, be sure to consult with your physician to rule out an injury before beginning any exercise program.

- **Choose exercises that work your core muscles simultaneously**, so muscles are “balanced” and strengthened equally.
- **Quality, not quantity.** Learn proper technique for maximum benefit and to avoid injury. Quantity will come over time.
- **Take a break.** Alternate exercises frequently, especially when you get tired. You are more likely to get injured or not perform your exercises correctly when tired. So if you become fatigued, either stop or switch to an exercise that works different muscle groups.
- **Lose weight.** Extra pounds around the abdomen add pressure to your back.
- **Improve your posture.** Poor posture also puts extra pressure on your back.
- **Learn about ergonomics.** Design your workstation for proper body alignment and look for furniture that provides good lower back support.
- **Sleeping position matters.** A firm mattress is recommended, and sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees, or on your back with a pillow under your knees, is often helpful.
- **Develop a “total fitness” approach.** Incorporate flexibility, weight training and aerobic exercise into your core strengthening program.

We can help you develop a program to strengthen your core and help relieve back pain.