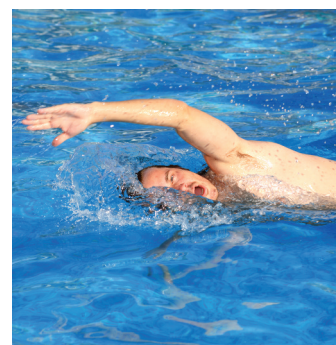


## Exercises for back pain

**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.

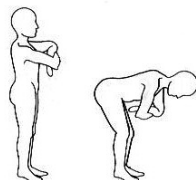


There are **many** other exercises that you could do which would be helpful. Although structured exercises are extremely beneficial, there are also some exercises you can do on your own at **home** without specialist equipment that can help to strengthen your back and prevent and ease back pain. If you 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

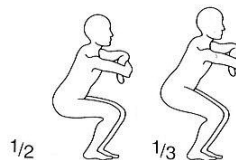
#### Good morning

- 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.



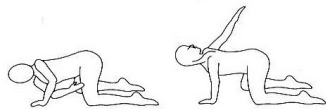
#### Cat's pose

- 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.



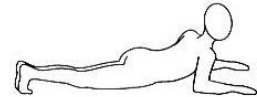
### Arm and leg extension

- 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.



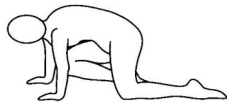
### Back arch

- 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.



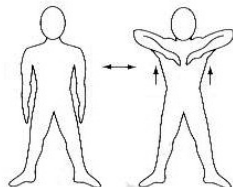
### Trunk rotators

- 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).



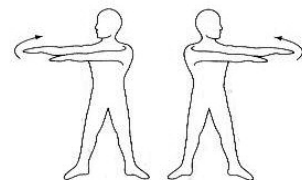
### Upright rowing

- 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](http://www.backcare.org.uk)**

## Top 10 tips for back pain

1. Exercise your back regularly – walking, swimming (especially back stroke) and using exercise bikes are all excellent to strengthen your back muscles but anything that you enjoy and helps you keep active will be beneficial.
2. Keep active and moving even when you have pain. Gentle walking and stretching will prevent stiffness. Also try to avoid long periods of bed rest as this is counterproductive.
3. Always lift and carry objects close to your body, bend your knees and your hips not your back and never twist and bend at the same time.
4. Try to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle as this will help prevent back pain. Quit smoking as it increases your chances of developing back pain.
5. Use painkillers when pain occurs to allow you to carry on being active. If pain is persistent see your GP as they may be able to prescribe stronger painkillers or investigate further.
6. Consider your work environment. If you work in an office look at your workspace and ways to adapt it to help you manage your back pain. If your work is more manual in nature try to be aware of and work according to health and safety procedures such as manual handling or loading procedures.
7. Try to carry loads in a rucksack and avoid carrying single sling bags.
8. Always try to maintain good posture. Avoid slumping in your chair, hunching over your desk and walking around with your shoulders hunched up.
9. Always use a chair with a back rest and sit with your feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest. Don't forget to change your sitting position every few minutes.
10. If you do suffer from back pain caused or made worse by being at work, talk to your employer or HR department. They may be able to help you come up with adaptations to your work environment, patterns and activities in order to help you better manage your back pain.



Information sheets made available by BackCare are provided for information only and should not be considered as medical recommendations or advice. Medical information is often controversial and continually changing. BackCare is not responsible for errors or omissions in the information. Some of the information may come from outside of the UK. This means for example, that some of the drug names may be different, and the sources of help quoted are not available in the UK. Please consult your GP or Specialist to discuss any specific concerns or if you are considering changing treatment in any way e.g. adding dietary supplements or different exercise routines.

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