

Back Pain Prevention: *Make Your Back Fit & Strong*

(Ron Jones, MS, ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor, Corporate Wellcoach)



Most people will suffer from back pain in their lives, yet few will do preventative exercises to “cure” **the root cause** of their problems. The solutions are usually simple—not complex. You can do them on your own without any special equipment, prescription drugs, or clinical interventions. In 5-10 minutes twice a week, most the people I have worked with have fixed their own backs! Compare this to hours in the doctor’s office and thousands for tests that usually don’t point to the cause of your pain. The solution is once again clear—FITNESS!

Back Facts

- 60-80% of people will suffer with back pain.
- ≈98% of back pain is NOT fixed by surgery!
- Only 1-5% of back pain is related to intervertebral discs.
- 95-98% of ALL back pain involves soft tissue—NOT the actual spine.
- Significant amount of MRIs and X-Rays are inconclusive.
- Software NOT hardware damage is the real problem—this means fitness is a primary solution!
- Back pain is the 2nd most common reason for medical visits, yet only 3% is spent on prevention i.e. fitness!

Back Pain Risk Factors

1. **PsychoSocial:** Stress, Fatigue, Substance Abuse
2. **Fitness:** ↓trunk mobility & ↓ stability (leads to postural compensations)
3. **Activity & Weight:** Sedentary vs. Too Active, Excess Weight+Weak Spine=☹
4. **Ergo:** Workstation, Lifting Tasks, Postural Compensations

Preventing Back Pain: Fitness Solutions!

MOBILITY

- **“free movement around a joint”**
- **Loosen up what is tight!**
- The best thing you can do for your back is to move. The worst thing is to sit, lie down, or be still *even after a back injury!*
- ↑ Movement=↑ Synovial Fluid
- **Synovial Fluid: “Juicing the Joints”**
Provides *lubrication & nutrition* for joints; decreases friction & premature aging of joints & cartilage.
- **Healthy Mobility:** ↓ movement compensations from poor load leveling.
- ***Exceptions:** Discs collapse

STABILITY

- **“control of movement”**
- **Tighten up what is loose!**
- Healthy “stiffness” helps maintain neutral spine & posture.
- Good posture *lengthens the spine & restores disc space* which can reduce or even eliminate pain.
- A long healthy spine ↓ compression forces on discs.
- Improves quality & safety of movements because you are moving away from a *solid foundation*.
- Keep stability *balanced* between: front/back, left/right, upper/lower, and inner/outer

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Phase I: Restorative Back Exercises

1. **Cat/Camel** (Flexion/Extension)
2. **Press Up** (Extension)
3. **Bird Dog** (Deep Spinal Stability)

- ✓ More gentle for “*high-pain situations*”
- ✓ ⊙ Rotation
- ✓ Gently “massage” nerves & tissues
- ✓ Introduce deep core strength
- ✓ Restore length & disc space to ↓ nerve irritation

ExRx: Perform daily as needed. 1-2 sets per day of 10-20 reps.

Phases II & III: High-Performance Back Exercises

Phase II

1. **Face Up Bridge**
2. **Face Down Bridge**
3. **Side Bridge**

- ✓ Strengthens *deepest inner layers* of muscle that are primary spinal stabilizers.
- ✓ **Bridges** are the most effective deep stability exercises and the most important for “preventing” back injuries!

ExRx: Begin with modified “knee” positions. After DWU, perform 2-3 days per week with “*at least*” 1 day of rest between sessions.

- Do 1-2 sets of 30 second bridges in this order: Face Up, Face Down, Side #1, Side #2, repeat 2nd set.
- Progression: *Toe-position* bridges

Phase III

1. **Cross Crunch (Front/Sides)**
2. **Superman (Back)**
3. **Bicycle Crunch**
4. **Russian Twist**
5. **Stability Ball Chops (Both)**

- ✓ More *superficial layers + rotators*
- ✓ There are “hundreds” of core exercises!
- ✓ These are just a few of the better ones.

ExRx: Perform “after” core bridging 2-3 days per week with “*at least*” 1 day of rest between sessions.

- Do 1-2 sets of 30 seconds (or 10-20 reps).
- Progression: *Superset* the Cross Crunch/Superman and Stability Ball ABS Chop/Back Chop.

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