

EXERCISES FOR LOWER BACK ACHE

IN UNDER 10 MINUTES!



I was thinking the other week as I was toying with the idea of how to create the simplest and easiest types of exercises that can relieve back ache and energise your body, and that you won't absolutely hate doing. Then I remembered morning tele from the 80s with the likes of Mad Lizzie and Mr Motivator, and how people did try and do bits, or at least it motivated us up off the sofa for a few minutes in the mornings.

What those exercises contained were core muscle strengthening routines, that kept niggling aches away as muscles got stretched and strengthened with thigh kicks to the pop music of the day – it was a few minutes of hectic exercise in the middle of the 'sofa-sedentary' news and I wonder if we're now missing something by not having them anymore... maybe they could be combined with the weather as we all tend to watch that!

HOW TO TELL IF A MUSCLE IS WEAK

Do you like pressure put on the place of pain, or like having heat there? If the answer is yes, you have a muscle that needs some assistance and is weak rather than tight.

With the best will in the world no therapy can resolve a weakened muscle on its own, gentle exercises are needed to stimulate and strengthen and they really do help. Muscle needs to be built where there is a weakness as the weakness leads to pain, and over compensation of other muscles (and they're the ones that are likely to get tight).

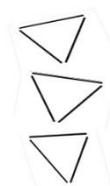
A mixture of therapy to release and relieve, along with exercise for strengthening together can bring back the quality of your weakened muscles and ease the associated pain.

There are so many types of exercise we're supposed to squeeze into our lives, but different types aid and resolve different issues. A lot of the regular exercise that people do only strengthen certain muscles, for example if you're a desk job worker who runs, this is a very repetitive exercise but won't strengthen and create flexibility in your back, hip & shoulder muscles but will aid greatly your cardio vascular health.

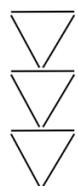
I swim a lot but I realised that swimming didn't solve my problems, but it did greatly improve my cardio health for running around a tennis court and strengthening my forearm returns. The tennis in turn gives me strengthening around the knees and the hips, with the random sideways darts and turns. So already there are 2 forms of exercise that I personally need, one without the other doesn't support all my needs.

You may be a dog walker with back ache, or someone whose work creates back pain from either being sedentary or twisting regularly. All these types of daily actions need something to support them as the same set of muscles are being regularly used, but not all muscles are used in all directions, and this is where we start getting weakened ones.

If a primary muscle does something repetitively without the backup muscles being strong enough to support, or one side is weakened and the other side becomes tighter; you'll end up becoming lop-sided. If you remain this way the body, being like 3 giant triangles balanced on top of one another, tries to rebalance, so if your lower back and pelvis are wrong then your shoulders try to adjust, then your head tries to adjust again.



Imbalanced muscles



Balanced muscles

QUICK, REGULAR EXERCISES FOR STRENGTH & FLEXIBILITY IN YOUR BACK

I don't mind if you do this 1, 3 or 5 times a week. If you miss a week, start again next week, it's better to do some than none, and you'll build up regularity as it becomes easier. I've designed them to flow from being on the floor to standing so you should be able to go from one to another with minimum change. If there are some you find you can't do, then potentially this is where you have something that a therapist may be able to resolve.

Only do these exercises if they feel comfortable, if you feel muscles wobbling or fatigue coming on you must ease off. Always exercise safely, always do with breathing - breathe in through the nose for the action and out through the mouth for the release.

Do the exercises slowly, mindfully and don't overstretch. As the source of back pain can be different for everyone, consult your doctor before doing any exercise if you are unsure, and stop the exercises if you get sharp pains.

ON YOUR RIGHT SIDE

CLAM – Bent knees, ankles together, lift at the knee using your hip muscles, don't twist your hips and back. Should feel an ache in your upper outer thigh.

Do 8

LEG LIFT - soft long leg, bent ankle, raise leg

Do 8

Repeat on Left Side



ON YOUR BACK

THIGH SQUEEZE - Knees bent, ankles together, and using an exercise roller, or equivalent household item (solid).

Squeeze the knees together using the inner thigh muscles and release. Should feel your inner thighs working.

Do 2 sets of 8

OPENING PELVIS - Left leg straight, bend the right leg at the knee, lift and bring over to across the left leg – Push down gently on the thigh to feel an opening through the groin.

Hold for 16. Repeat for other side



Handy Tip: Have your favourite essential oil (like Lemongrass) to hand in a diffuser, pop it on so that you get a full sensory experience – perking up your brain at the same time as your body!

LOWER STOMACH - Knees bent, raise to chest, extend legs out horizontally, holding your entire core and lower abdominals to allow the leg stretch.

Hands out to the side or forward for balance. You should feel the lower abdominals working.

Do 8, but start gently!



UPPER STOMACH - Knees bent, feet hip width apart on floor

Hands at sides of head, curl up from shoulders, towards knees – Using the upper abdominal muscles (just below rib cage) to enable curl.

Do 8



SITTING

WITH LEGS OUTSTRETCHED – Go into a side bend to the right, but don't collapse in, keep long arm straight to hold you up, use upper arm to stretch open the side.

HOLD FOR 8 – Repeat for Left side



HAM STRING STRETCH – Sitting with your legs stretched out in front, ankles together. Lean forwards, using your hands to hold your feet, or ankles or lower legs, feel the stretch up the backs of your legs.

HOLD FOR 16



From Sitting into 'PIDGEON'

Bend your legs into position and lean forwards in line with the straight leg, place hands in either position shown. Should feel opening in back of hip joint.

HOLD FOR 16 – Repeat for other leg



ROLL FLAT ON TO YOUR FRONT

SHOULDER STRENGTHEN & SPINE STRETCH – Bring your arms tucked in under your chest, raise up on your elbows, Take your head back. Stretch of the neck & spine.

Hold for a count of 8, relax down, Repeat



KNEELING – with feet slightly apart so bum touches floor

QUAD STRETCH – lean back using your arms to support you where they are comfortable – You should feel a stretch through thighs & stomach. Come up on an 'in' breath, holding stomach muscles. Should feel stretch through the front of thighs.

You can lean back against a sofa/ chair cushions under lower back to support back, shoulders & head as you learn this one

HOLD FOR 8

Then release and go into Childs pose to relax...



LIFT UP ON TO YOUR HANDS & KNEES

BACK ARCHING – Arch your spine, with your head tucked under, then concave your spine, bring your head up and back. A flat back is the neutral position.

Alternate for 16



ON YOUR HANDS & KNEES

Stretch your legs and lift up, to create an inverted 'V' – you should feel a stretch down the backs of your legs

Hold for count of 8

Alternatively sit with your legs stretched out in front of you, bend forwards, stretching to touch your toes



STAND UP

LUNGES FOR KNEES & THIGHS

Right knee forward and bent, left leg back and stretched – Put arms out for balance. Lunge and hold, and bring forward leg back to standing as you finish. Feel your body weight push down through your front leg and the stretch through the ham strings in your rear leg. You can lunge in the semi position of photo 1, to build up to the full lunge in photo 2.

Alternate legs

Do 8 (4 each leg)



SIDE STRETCH - Legs at least shoulder width apart. Left hand, press around just under left hip bone. Bend sideways to the left, which will push down on your left hand into your hip, but keep this side as open as possible, with the right hand supporting the waist and the stretch you should feel through it.

Hold for 16

Alternate to the right hip – Hold 16

Do 2 each side



VERTERBRAL LOOSEN UP!

Stand with your feet shoulder with apart, your pelvis should be slightly tilted under and your knees soft. Start rotating at the waist, trying to maintain static hips facing forwards. Your arms are by your side and only lift naturally with the force of the swing. Do not twist with the shoulders. This is about using your waist muscles and allowing your spine to rotate on its axis.

Do for at least a minute or two until you feel your spine loosening/relaxing – build up to the swing, and slow-down from the swing. Using controlled breathing throughout.



Start turning side to side, using the waist only, as you build up to turning further around you can bring in the chest & neck vertebrae. You can rotate your eyeline over 360 degrees; a bit like an owl!

THE END ☺

I keep this PDF with me in my room where I can exercise, in a few days you'll know which ones you can do easily and the order to do them in. Don't be tempted to do more or to over stretch, we don't want you taking more than 10 minutes as I don't want you to dread doing them. At the end you should feel quite limbered up and energised. A positive of doing some of these stretches is that they energise the Stomach & Spleen Chinese Meridians which give you a satisfaction across the belly region, which I believe, subconsciously, we try to achieve with eating when not hungry. A great time of day to do these is between 7am and 11am as this is the time that St & Sp are processing food so help them energise by stretching them a little. I hope you enjoy doing these exercises and I always welcome feedback!

Andrea Marsh is an MRSS Shiatsu Practitioner
and works at Shiatsu Bodyworks in Cheltenham

www.shiatsubodyworks.co.uk

