



ABOUT EXERCISE

Along with body mechanics, exercise plays a key role in the recovery and prevention of low back pain. When performed correctly, exercise can decrease inflammation and speed the recovery process by increasing nutrients to the affected area. Continuing an appropriate exercise program as part of your daily life will provide you with the strength, flexibility and endurance required for maintaining a healthy back. Your post-operative program is designed for your recovery from surgery. After the physical therapist evaluates and assesses your condition, he/she will instruct you on appropriate exercises, your exercise program will be advanced appropriately and your progress monitored throughout your recovery phase.

When exercising, keep in mind some important points:

1. Use abdominal bracing as you find and maintain your neutral, pain-free position.
2. “Don’t bend your back”.
3. Build exercise into your daily routine. Set aside a specific time for formal exercise and learn ways to make many daily activities into exercise. You may climb stairs to build up your legs as you keep your abdominal braced, or you may do your squatting exercise as you talk on the phone. It is your responsibility to find an appropriate amount of time, although the amount of time devoted to exercise will vary from patient to patient. Develop good habits for a lifetime of exercise!
4. Pillows and rolled-up towels may be used to help support your neck or back while exercising. For example, while you are lying on your side, you may want support under your neck in addition to your waist.
5. Exercise on a semi-firm surface. If your bed is too soft or the floor is too hard, it may be helpful to purchase an exercise mat.
6. Exercises are to be done **slowly**. To increase your flexibility, you must gently stretch the appropriate muscles for ten to fifteen seconds. Stretching too hard and too quickly may result in tightened muscles. To strengthen a muscle, you need to tighten the muscle slowly and progressively so that you get a good, strong contraction. Releasing the muscle slowly will give you added strength and control. Remember, exercise should be painless to your back if you are maintaining your neutral position.
7. It is essential that you always remember to breathe slowly and easily throughout an exercise. Straining and holding your breath does not make you any stronger. Proper breathing can help muscles relax in addition to providing a steady flow of oxygen to the muscles. Try exercising in a peaceful environment. If you get bored, put on some music. Remember, exercise has many functions. It not only helps you take charge of your back, it can prevent osteoporosis, act as a mood elevator, as well as, strengthen and improve your cardiovascular system.



Stabilizing your spine takes abdominal tightening and diaphragm control. This limits your breathing at first but becomes a normal habit pattern with time.