

# Exercises for better back care

## General Instructions

Your best back support is derived from your own back muscles! Faithful performance of back exercises often avoids the necessity of an external brace or corset. Back muscles can give you all the support needed if you strengthen them by routine performance of prescribed exercise.

## Exercises

Follow the exercise routine prescribed by your doctor. Gradually increase the frequency of your exercises as

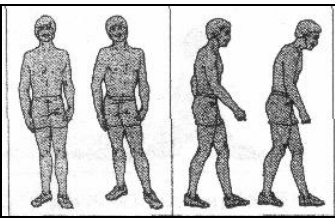
your condition improves, but stop when fatigued. If your muscles are tight, take a warm shower or tub bath before performing your back exercises. If the pain diminishes as you repeat an exercise then the exercise is the correct one for your condition. On the other hand if you repeat an exercise and the pain worsens, this exercise should be discontinued.

Exercise on a rug or mat. Put a small pillow under your neck. Wear loose clothing. Stop doing any exercise that causes pain until you have checked with your doctor.

# Helpful hints for a healthy back

## Standing and walking

Try to point toes straight ahead when walking; put most of your weight on your heels; hold your chest forward and elevate the front of the pelvis as if walking up an

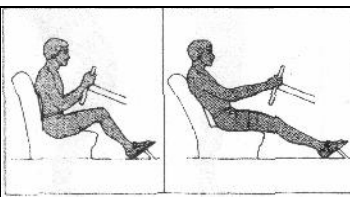


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incline. Stand as if you are trying to touch the ceiling with the top of your head, eyes straight ahead. All the elements of good posture will flow from these simple maneuvers.

## Driving

Use a firm seat with a padded pillow or special seat support. Sit close to the wheel with knees bent. On long trips, stop every one to two hours and walk to relieve tension and relax muscles. Often times arching backwards after prolonged sitting helps to alleviate low back pain.

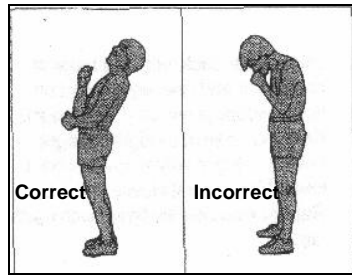


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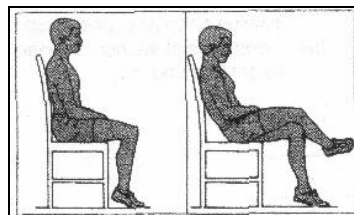
## Coughing / Sneezing

Stand upright and bend backwards as you cough or sneeze.

## Sitting



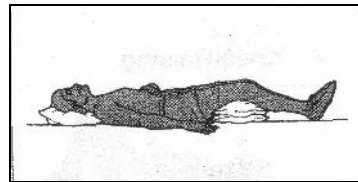
Sit in a firm back chair that offers support to the lumbar area of the spine (low back). Often times a small roll placed between the chair and your low back helps to maintain the hollow (lordosis) of the low back. Secretaries should adjust posture and chairs accordingly. Take exercise breaks from desk work by getting up, moving around and performing a few back exercises in the standing position.



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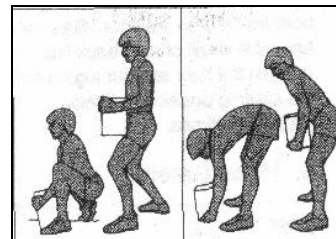
## Sleeping

Sleep on a firm mattress. With acute back pain, lie on your back with a pillow under your knees and head. Often times, rolling a towel lengthwise and fastening it around your waist can increase the comfort of your back while sleeping.



## Lifting

Bend your knees; squat and lift with your thigh muscles, not your back. Maintain back lordosis (hollow in low back). Move slowly and avoid sudden movements. Try to avoid lifting loads in front of you above the waist line.

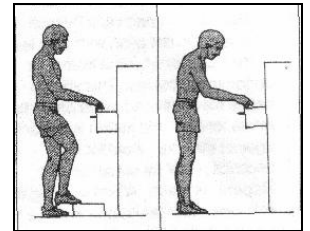


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Avoid bending over to lift heavy objects from car trunks, as this places a strain on low back muscles.

## Working-Standing

Try to avoid fatigue caused by work requiring long periods of standing. Flex hips and knees by placing a foot on a stool or bench. Avoid standing with excessive lordosis (too much of a hollow in

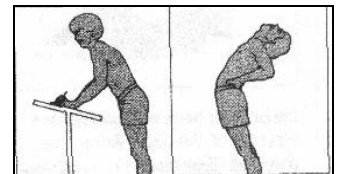


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the low back). This position strains the small joints of the back causing fatigue. Performing the pelvic tilt while standing also relieves fatigue.

## Working-Stooping

If working in a stooped position



for prolonged periods, then interrupt posture on regular basis by standing upright and bend backwards 6 times. If possible try to avoid working in a stooped position for prolonged periods.

## EXERCISES

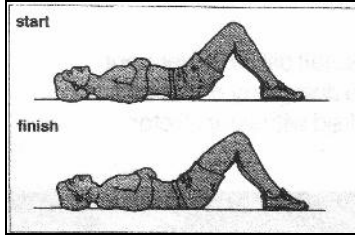
### Flexion

#### General Comment

Stay as active as possible. Muscles tighten and stay in spasm if they are not allowed to stretch.

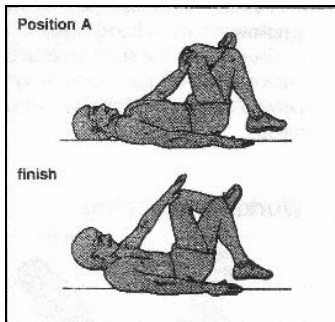
#### 1. Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on floor. Press the small of your



back against the floor and tighten your stomach and buttock muscles. Do not push with your feet—all the pull should come from your abdominal muscles. This should cause the lower end of the pelvis to rotate forward and flatten your back against the floor. Hold for six seconds; relax for six seconds. Repeat six times. When learning this exercise it is often helpful to place a hand in hollow of your back to feel the small of your back pressing in towards the floor.

#### 2. Cross-Arm Knee Pushing

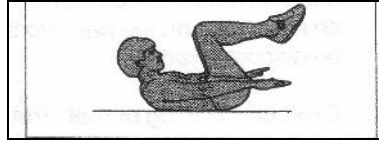


Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on the floor. Adopt the pelvic tilt (Exercise #1). Bend your right hip and knee to form a ninety-degree angle. (Position A.) Place left hand on right knee keeping your arm straight. Raise your head and tuck in your chin. Now push your leg with your arm to create a good abdominal contraction. Count to six and relax. Repeat process six times with same arm and leg. Now change to other arm and leg and repeat whole sequence.

Note: This is an isometric exercise. There should be no movement.

#### 3. The Curl

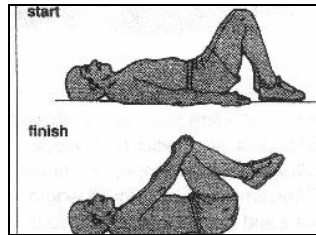
Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on the floor. Adopt the pelvic tilt



(Exercise #1). Bring your knees to your chest. Tuck your chin down onto your chest. Keep your arms straight at your sides and slightly raised. Curl yourself up, aiming your forehead for your knees. Repeat six times.

#### 4. Knee Raising

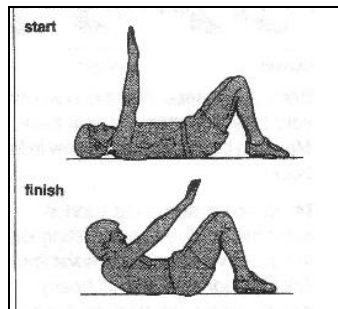
Lie on your back with knees bent. Feet flat on the floor. Grasp both knees and



pull them as close to your chest as possible. Hold for three seconds then lower them slowly until both feet are on the floor. Be sure to keep the small of your back flat against the floor as your legs return to the starting position and relax. Repeat six times.

#### 5. Head Raising

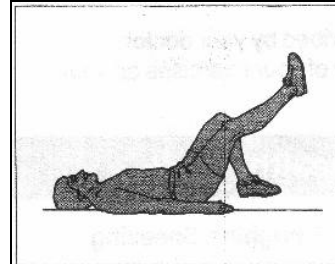
Lie on your back, feet flat on floor.



Adopt pelvic tilt (Exercise #1). Hold your arms straight up in air. Tuck chin against chest. Now lift head towards your knees, rolling up as if to sit up. Keeping feet flat on floor, raise yourself until shoulder blades clear the floor. Hold for six seconds, recline for six seconds, then repeat six times.

#### 6. Leg Raising

Lie on your back with one hip and knee bent and one leg straight on floor. Adopt pelvic tilt (Exercise #1). Keeping knee of straight leg tight, raise this leg slowly to level of bent



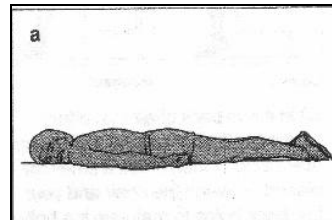
knee then lower it slowly to the floor. Repeat exercise six times with each leg.

#### 7. Extension

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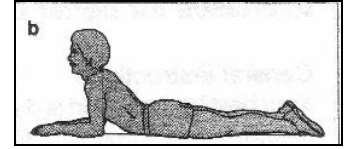
Recent clinical experience at the Canadian Back Institute has demonstrated that the following extension exercises are often helpful in alleviating discogenic pain. Repeat these exercises at two hour intervals, six to eight times per day.

a) Lie on your stomach on the floor, arms at your side and head turned to one side. Now make a conscious effort to relax the muscles in your

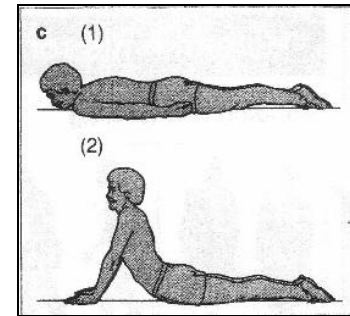


low back. This position should be done before you begin each exercise session. Hold for a few minutes.

b) Starting position, as for exercise 7a. Put your elbows under your shoulders and support your upper body on your forearms. Should you notice a reduction in pain, then hold for 5 minutes. If pain increases then discontinue. If this exercise has been successful in decreasing your pain, then move on to exercise 7c.

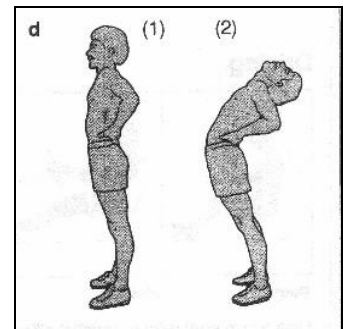


c) Starting position. Lie on your stomach, chin resting on the floor (1). Then put hands under your shoulders. Now straighten your



elbows and push up upper part of body as far as pain permits (2). Keep the pelvis, hips and legs completely relaxed. Try to extend your back as much as possible with your arms as straight as possible. Hold position for 2 seconds. Return to starting position. Repeat 10 times.

d) Starting Position. Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Place hands in hollow of your back, fingers pointing backwards (1). Now bend backwards, at the waist, as far as



you can, keeping knees straight (2). Hold position for 2 seconds, return to starting position. Repeat 6 times.

From 3M and CBI information sheet