

Physically**FIT**

Lower back pain is one of our nation's leading public health problems. Perhaps you or someone you know has suffered with recurrent back pain. Athletes often experience this type of injury when excessively increasing their training loads, duration, intensity or frequency of training. It is safe to say that many injuries (either at work, home or sport) are due to doing too much, too often, too quickly and with too little rest. All of these contribute to increased stresses to which your body may or may not adapt.



Let's take a look at why this and other types of injuries occur. The human body has a unique ability to react very predictably to specific physical stresses placed upon it and it will attempt to adapt to these stresses. Think of your upper arm. When you lift something light, your biceps may contract slightly. When you lift something heav-

ier, there will be a stronger contraction and you will see a bulging biceps. But, when a load or stress exceeds what your body is accustomed to, injury will eventually occur. If this is repeated over a period of time, the body cannot adapt to the excess stress being placed on it and an injury will eventually occur.

With this being said, the lower back is often the weak link due to insufficient core strength and stability. Strengthening the core will help in the prevention of low back pain and injury.

To perform the majority of these exercises you will need a physioball and clearance from your physician to begin an exercise program. Prior to purchasing a physioball, I would strongly recommend that you consult with a Physical Therapist, Athletic Trainer or a personal trainer to determine the best ball for you.

Physioball Bridge: Place your shoulder blades on the top of the ball. Your feet should be hip distance apart. Lift your hips so that your back is parallel to the floor. Begin by holding 30 seconds and progress to two minutes. Make sure that you do not arch your back. The flatter you make the back the better. This exercise will activate the posterior fibers of the gluteus medius.

Physioball Bridge with Band Around Your Thighs: You will need a piece of power band for this exercise. Follow the same initial instructions of the aforemen-

Back in Action *A Healthier* **you**

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tioned physioball bridge; however, you are going to put the band around your thighs and attempt to pull it apart. Make sure that your back is flat and when you pull your thighs apart and be certain not to arch your back. Begin by holding for 30 seconds and progress to two minutes.

Physioball Bridge March: Follow the same initial instructions of the aforementioned physioball bridge. For this exercise, your back and pelvis must remain absolutely still. Once you are in the bridge position, slowly lift your left leg straight out without letting your hips tilt to either side. Hold for a three-second count and then perform with your right leg. Begin with 30 seconds and progress to two minutes.

Swimmers: Begin by lying on your stomach and pressing your forehead into your workout mat or carpet. Raise your right arm and left leg to stabilize. There should be no bending in either your elbow or knee. Hold for a second count and repeat the opposite side. Begin with one set of 10 reps each side and progress to three sets of 10.

Curl Ups: Lie flat with your legs straight. Your arms should be straight and over your head. This will make your back arch. Attempt to flatten your back against the floor then bend your knees while keeping your feet flat on the floor. Keeping your arms behind your head as you do a curl up - until the bottom of your shoulder blade comes off the mat. Remember to keep your abdominals tight and your low back flat at all times. Begin by performing 10 reps and slowly increase to two to three sets of 10 reps.

Low back pain is certainly no fun. However, through exercise, we may help reduce the risk of an injury. Consult with your physician and if he or she gives you the green light, get started and feel the difference!



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