

General advice for lower back care and maintenance:

- Do not cross your legs at the knees as sitting in this twisted posture will cause additional stress in the lower back.
 - Do not lift anything heavy.
 - If you must lift something keep your back straight, bend your knees and let your arms and thigh muscles take the weight.
 - Hold the object close to your body.
 - Avoid twisting movements.
 - At all times keep your back straight, maintaining the natural hollow of the lumbar spine.
 - If the curve is flattened the lumbar spine is compressed and this is inclined to re-stress the lower back.
- Therefore, avoid bending forward and go down by bending the knees.
- When bending slightly forward, e.g. washing your face, or reaching across the desk for something, tilt forward from the hips.
 - Do not slump while sitting, do not sit with your feet up, do not sit up in bed or on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you. Avoid reclining in the bath as this reverses the normal lumbar curve.
 - When sitting or driving place a cushion in the hollow of your back.
 - When sitting, ideally the knees should not be higher than the hips.
 - If you sleep on your side, do not draw your knees up to your chin as this rounds the lumbar spine.
 - If you sleep on your back, you may find it comfortable to place a thin cushion or folded towel under the lumbar curve, and a cushion under your knees.
 - Your mattress should not be too soft or too hard – it should provide some “give” to support the natural spinal curves.

General advice for neck care and maintenance:

- If you sleep on your back, have a thin, soft pillow which you can mould to support the hollow of the neck.
- Never sleep on your stomach as lying with the neck twisted is harmful.
- Do not use a thick pillow which would tilt the chin downwards.

- If you sleep on your side double the pillow over to ensure that your head remains level, and does not tilt onto your shoulder.
- Avoid strenuous neck exercises. They are not necessary and may induce stress into the neck.
- Keep the movement of your neck smooth and avoid twisting and jerking your head.
- Each morning and evening and at any time that you have strained your neck, check for sensitive spots and ease them as your practitioner has shown you.
- If you have a backwash at the hairdresser, ask for a folded towel to be placed over the edge of the basin, to act as padding to support the curve of the neck.

Advice for using the computer

- Adjust the height of the chair so your feet can rest completely on the floor.
- Use a high back chair that supports your shoulder blades if at all possible.
- Lean back slightly. Make sure your chair back will support your shoulders at this angle while still providing good lumbar support.
- Position your computer screen at eye level so that you are looking directly ahead, not up or down.
- Take frequent breaks - ten minutes for every hour of work and 30 second micro-breaks every 10 minutes is a good schedule.
- Change your position frequently. Move your feet, lift your arms, adjust your hips, and just make sure to subtly alter your posture continuously throughout the work day.

Exercises for the lower back:

Daily morning exercise to strengthen the lower back (Tummy Tuck).

- On waking lie on your back in bed, before getting up.
- Tighten and relax the abdominal muscles, without moving the body, in quick repetitions for 30 to 100 times.
- Do not lift your head or neck.
- No strain or effort is necessary.
- The exercise should not take longer than a minute or two.

Pelvic tilt

- Lie on your back with knees bent, with feet flat on the floor.
- Tighten your stomach by pulling in and imagining your belly button moving toward your spine.
- Raise your hips a few inches off the floor.
- Hold for 10 seconds while breathing in and out smoothly.
- Repeat 10 times.



Cat stretch

- Start on your hands and knees.
- Keep your spine straight, i.e. look at the ground.
- Accentuate the lumbar curve of the lower back by bringing your navel closer to the ground.
- Then bring your spine back to the starting position of being straight.
- Repeat 10 times.



Single leg raise

- Lie on your back with one leg straight and the other leg bent at the knee.
- Slowly lift the straight leg up about 6 inches and hold briefly.
- Lower leg slowly.
- Repeat 10 times, and then switch legs.



Swim

- Lie flat on the ground with your nose almost touching the floor and your arms outstretched in front of you.
- Slowly lift your right arm and your left leg a couple of inches off the floor.
- Lower your leg and arm slowly back to the starting position.
- Then slowly lift your left arm and right leg a couple of inches off the floor.
- Lower your leg and arm slowly back to the starting position.
- Repeat ten times on each side.



Bird Dog

- Start on your hands and knees and tighten your stomach muscles.
- Lift and extend one leg behind you.
- Simultaneously, if comfortable, try lifting and extending the opposite arm for each repetition.
- Keep hips level.
- Hold for 5 seconds, and then switch to the other leg and arm.
- Repeat 10 times for each side.
- While doing this exercise, don't let the lower back muscles sag.



Advanced:

Bridging

- Lie on your back with knees bent and just your heels on the floor.
- Push your heels into the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until shoulders, hips, and knees are in a straight line.
- Hold about 6 seconds.
- Slowly lower hips to the floor and rest for 10 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.

- Avoid arching your lower back as your hips move upward.
- Avoid over-arching by tightening your abdominal muscles before and throughout the lift.



Plank

- Lie face down with your elbows positioned under your shoulders, hands extended to the front, with your feet together, and pressure on the underside of your toes, keeping your back straight.
- Lift your hips in the air, keeping your back straight.
- Keep your hips, shoulders and neck aligned.
- Pull your navel towards your spine to engage your abdominal muscles.
- Hold for as long is comfortable, but not longer than one minute.
- Lower your knees slowly to the floor and lie down again to rest.
- Repeat 3 times, if comfortable.



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Beneficial Exercises and General advice

- Consult with your BSR practitioner before commencing exercises to make sure that your back is ready.
- Brisk walking, swimming, cycling in the upright position and rebounding on a mini-trampoline tend to be back-friendly exercises.
- With all exercises, make sure to build up gradually.
- If any exercise increases pain, it should be stopped.
- These exercises must be done on the floor.

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