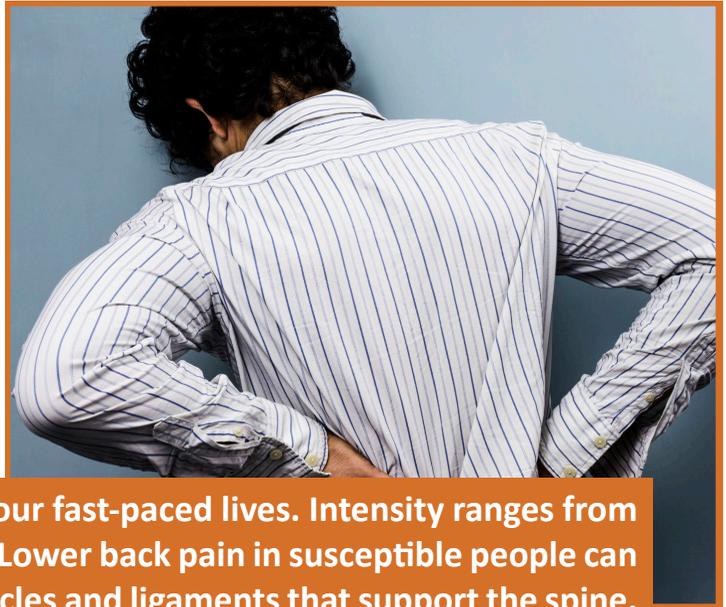


Exercise to ease lower back pain



Lower back pain takes a heavy toll in our fast-paced lives. Intensity ranges from a dull ache to severe, prolonged pain. Lower back pain in susceptible people can be due to unusual stresses on the muscles and ligaments that support the spine.

Prevention of lower back pain typically involves a range of recommendations, including:

- Regular exercise to strengthen back and abdominal muscles.
- If you're overweight, try to lose weight to lessen the strain on the back.
- Lift using your knees, rather than at your waist, and use your leg muscles, not your lower back, to do the work.
- Avoid twisting or bending at the waist while handling or passing a load to someone else.
- Avoid sitting, standing, or working in any one position for too long.
- Maintain a correct posture as much as possible.
- Use a comfortable, supportive seat while driving.
- Sleep on a firm mattress. Either sleep on your side in foetal position, or on your back with a slim pillow wedged under bent knees.
- Avoid smoking. Studies have proven that smoking increases degenerative changes of the spine.
- Try to reduce emotional stress that causes muscular tension.
- Ensure your muscles are thoroughly warmed up before engaging in vigorous exercise.
- Increase exercise gradually when attempting to improve strength or athletic ability.

Is it dangerous to exercise if I have a bad back?

It is recommended that you see a doctor immediately if your back pain:

- Follows an injury.
- Follows lifting a heavy object.
- Is accompanied by continuous tingling, numbness, or weakness in the legs or body.
- Is accompanied by a fever or chills.
- Is accompanied by loss of bowel or bladder control.

If the exercise or movement hurts, stop doing it until medical advice is obtained. If there is moderate to severe pain, wait until the symptoms lessen before starting an exercise programme. Each exercise session should be preceded by a gentle warm-up, ideally by walking or riding a stationary bike at easy pace for about 10 minutes to warm the muscles and increase blood flow, making it easier to stretch.

Doctors also recommend that people with lower back pain engage in low-stress activities like walking, cycling, or swimming during the first two weeks after symptoms begin, even if the activity makes the symptoms slightly worse. The most important goal is to return to your normal activities as soon as it is safe.