

## Exercise and Your Spine



### Overview

Exercise is to the spine, as water is to a plant. Just as too much water can cause damage to a plant, too much exercise can cause increased pain. However, plants always need water, and muscles always need some type of exercise. If you overwater a plant once, you do not stop watering the plant all together, but change the amount you water it in the future. Similarly, if you over-exercise, you need to adjust your program, but continue exercising.

***The key is finding the right exercises.***

### Why Exercise?

Muscles provide dynamic stability to the spine, forming the world's greatest spinal brace. All muscles must be taken care of through regular and consistent exercise to maintain strength, flexibility and coordination.

No matter your condition, one of the key ways to improve your condition is through a regular and continuous program.

### How to Exercise

A well-developed exercise program is seven-fold and should include all of the following:

1. Aerobic exercises (Cardio)
2. Core strength (Stability)
3. Range of motion (Flexibility)
4. Overall strength and coordination
5. Good sleep
6. Good nutrition
7. Stress management

A daily home exercise program which incorporates all seven of these aspects is important to recovering and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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## Neck Stretches and Exercises

As we go through life, the discs in our spine slowly age and degenerate, often causing pain in our neck, shoulders and arms. It's similar to the tread on your tires wearing out. Like most people today, you probably spend long periods of time watching TV or sitting at a desk, and have difficulty finding the time to do neck stretches and exercises. Here are some simple stretches and exercises that you can do anywhere to relieve pain.

Check out Dr. Kim's **YouTube** video at: [youtu.be/E5cCa8ePOCc](https://youtu.be/E5cCa8ePOCc)

### NECK FLEXION AND EXTENSIONS

- Interlock your fingers and place your hands at the back of your head
- Use your hands to put gentle pressure on your head
- Full range of motion both forward and back
- Do 10 repetitions



### ROTATION STRETCHES

- Place one hand on your chin
- Use your hand to put gentle pressure on your chin as you look to your right and left
- Do 10 repetitions



### SIDE-TO-SIDE

- Place your hand on your temple
- Use your hand to put gentle pressure on your head as you move your head side-to-side
- You may want to use two hands
- Do 10 repetitions



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## **Chair Stretches and Exercises**

As we go through life, the discs in our spine slowly age and degenerate, often causing pain in our low back, buttocks and legs. It's similar to the tread on your tires wearing out. Like most people today, you probably spend long periods of time watching TV or sitting at a desk, and have difficulty finding the time to do low back stretches and exercises. Here are some simple stretches and exercises you can do with a chair to relieve pain.

Check out Dr. Kim's **YouTube** video at: [goo.gl/mG4Bo8](https://goo.gl/mG4Bo8)!

### **PROPER SITTING POSITION**

- When you're sitting for a long time, you naturally start to rest your muscles and sink into the chair
- As you do this, all the weight of your upper body bears down on the discs in your spine
- It's important to make sure that you sit properly in your chair
- Make sure you have a chair low enough that you can plant your feet firmly on the ground so that some of the weight is redistributed to your feet
- Every 20-30 minutes, sit at the edge of your chair and activate those muscles surrounding the spine



### **FORWARD STRETCHING**



- Bend all the way forward, put your head in between your knees, and place your hands on your feet or ankles to provide support
- Hold for 20-30 seconds and don't forget to breathe
- Make sure to use your arms to push yourself back up to avoid straining any muscles



### **ROTATION STRETCHES**

- Another stretch is using the arms or back of the chair to gently turn your upper torso
- Hold for 20-30 seconds and don't forget to breathe
- The intention is to stretch, but if your back "cracks", that's okay

### **REVERSE LEG LIFTS**

- This set of exercises should be done standing up and using the back of the chair for support
- This activates the back and gluteal muscles
- Slowly lift your leg backwards and hold it for 1-2 seconds
- Do this 10-20 times
- You can do the same exercise sideways and at a 45° angle (seen above)



## Caring for Your Spine

**Perform each exercise for 10-15 repetitions and  
hold each stretch for 30 seconds. Repeat at least 5 times per week**

**For Neck: Position head, exert pressure while returning head to upright position.**



Gentle Neck Extensions  
With Light Resistance



Gentle Neck Bends  
With Light Resistance



Gentle Neck Turns  
With Light Resistance

**For Low Back: Start in relaxed position, tighten core and perform repetitions.**



Bridge



Side Leg Raise



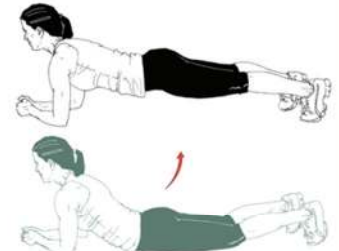
Rear Leg Raise

Other important factors  
for a healthy lifestyle include:

- proper and consistent sleep
- stress management
- good nutrition



Lying Leg Stretches



Plank



Consistency and proper form are key to strengthening our bodies.

Performing these exercises and stretches with proper form and frequency will help you increase your flexibility as well as strengthen important spine stabilizing muscles.




## **Posture Exercises**

### **Tadasana (Mountain Pose)**





A regular routine including proper exercises and stretches can help ensure you maintain a healthy spine and an active lifestyle.

This exercise helps strengthen the muscles in your back which enable you to stand up straight.



**Focus on the following:**

1. Tighten quads to straighten legs
2. Tighten gluteals (tilt pelvis forward)
3. Tighten lumbar paraspinal muscle
4. Pull shoulders and rib cage back



Practice this exercise in front of a mirror every morning and any time you pass a reflective surface throughout the day to improve posture and back strength over time.