



Top 10 Exercises

TO RELIEVE
your
BACK PAIN

BODY
smart

About the Author



My name is Cameron Garber. I'm a Doctor of Physical Therapy, a husband, a father to four energetic boys and an avid proponent of a healthy lifestyle.

As a physical therapist I help people every day to know, understand and treat their body better. That's why we're called Body Smart. I use an intuitive and individualized approach to help my people discover, learn about and quickly find the solution to their problem.

Before opening Body Smart I was a leading therapist of the outpatient stroke team at the University of Utah. I became frustrated with the current health care model's willingness to spend millions on treating preventable diseases. This led me to leave my position and begin working on true prevention health care. The emphasis of my practice is now lifelong wellness. I have become an expert, national speaker and educator regarding metabolism, weight loss and restoring people not only to full function, but to a lifetime of fitness.

My goal is to leave every patient with a long-term plan for health improvement. Body Smart is more than a name, it's my mission! I aim to help everyone understand their problem, how it affects their body and how to resolve it permanently!

Introduction

This eBook is written to help you understand more about your low back pain. I hope to help you uncover more about how and why you may be hurting and the steps you can take to find relief of your symptoms.

In this guide you will learn the **3 most common types** of low back pain, my **top 10 exercises for finding back pain relief** and the **12 questions** you need to ask to know if you need to **seek help** from a back pain expert.

Compiled from years of experience and education, this guide is designed to give you some tools to begin easing your pain and **taking back your life**. It's a resource designed for anyone who wants to stay active and healthy and wants to avoid unnecessary surgeries, pain, medications, and time spent away from doing the things they love. It's for those who value their health and independence enough to take a **simple step** towards freedom from suffering and learning more about what can be done to improve their health. I look forward to sharing this information with you to help you start on the path towards health and wellness.

3 Main Types of low back pain. What's yours?

Back pain can come on in many ways and for many reasons. It is one of the most common reasons people seek medical help. No matter how or why your back is hurting, it can be *debilitating*. Understanding more about the type of back pain you are experiencing can go a long way towards helping you find relief. Let's see if we can help you determine why you're hurting.

1. Muscle strain or sprain

A muscle strain in the low back is one of the most common forms of low back pain. It's the kind of pain that you feel the day after lifting something heavy or doing something active you haven't done in a while. Who hasn't done that, right? It's usually a 'my muscles are stiff, it aches, and it hurts to move or stretch' kind of pain.



Luckily, this type of pain usually resolves quickly with little to no treatment, depending on the severity of the strain. Most muscle strains resolve within 72 hours with ice, ibuprofen and rest. Adding in gentle movement can be helpful. If the pain continues past 3 days, it may be more of a severe strain and may be helped by further investigation. Visiting a back pain expert like a physical therapist can be helpful for getting you back on track.

If you're wondering what you should do about your back pain, Body Smart can help answer your questions about what may be the best route for you.

2. Disc-related Issues

Another very common form of low back pain is caused by disc bulges. This is the sharp stabbing or pinching pain that can take your breath away at times. Often, symptoms are described as shocks of pain that travel across the back or down the legs. If left alone it can cause numbness and weakness. If treated early, the primary pain can resolve within a few days to a week. The pain or threat of pain and some stiffness might linger for as many as 6 to 8 weeks. Let's take a deeper look at disc bulges:

Imagine that in between the bones of your back you have something called a disc. This disc is formed kind of like a jelly donut. Just like a donut the disc has a tougher outer layer (annulus fibrosus) and then a thin inner gel-like center (nucleus pulposus). If you can imagine what would happen if you squished the jelly donut between two objects, but only on one side. You would see the jelly would squish out the opposite side.

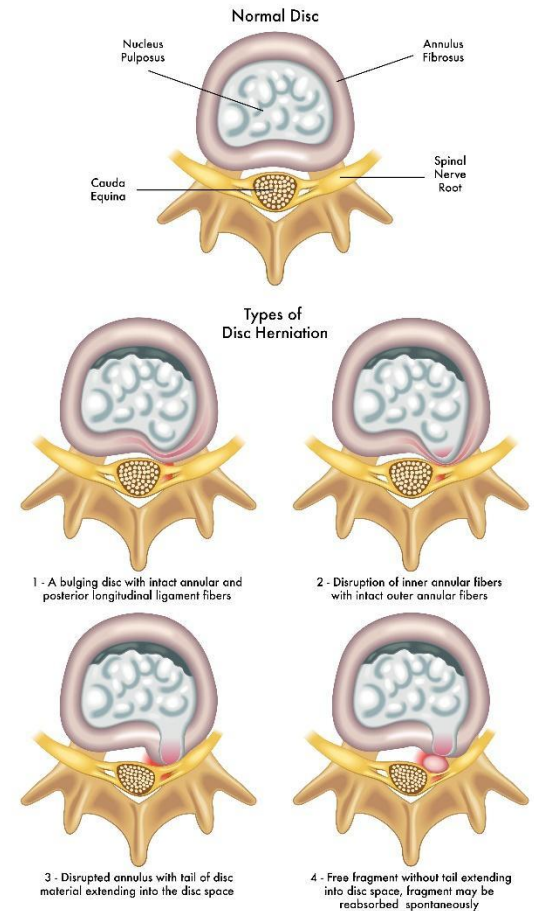
When talking about a disc bulge, the jelly donut phenomenon is essentially what happens. Flexing and bending forward, especially for prolonged periods of time (like sitting at a desk or driving) or lifting something heavy, can cause the jelly to bulge past the tough outer layer and pinch the nerves in the spine. The nerve getting pushed on or pinched by the bulging disc material is what causes the sharp pain which travels down the back and legs and causes numbness.

Early treatment can be helpful. The more quickly you can get help, the sooner you can get your symptoms relieved. A physical therapist can help you decide on the best plan forward to get you feeling better.

3. Age-related changes

Sometimes, you'll hear physicians use terms like *degenerative disc disease* or *bone spurs*, to describe these changes, and it can sound really scary.

One way I like to think about these types of changes is "wrinkles on the



inside.” They’re a natural part of the aging process, and don’t necessarily mean there’s a problem.

In fact, many people that have these types of changes in their bodies never experience *any* back pain.

That being said, sometimes these things do play a role in the symptoms of low back pain.

Things like stiffness in the back, loss of full movement, and pain with bending backward or standing up straight. Some find prolonged standing and activity very painful.

Although nothing can magically reverse the aging process, there are exercises that help to improve mobility and decrease pain. The right type of exercise can be very helpful for those who have arthritic back pain.

Keep reading in this guide. Below, you can learn more about some of the exercises you can do to self-treat this type of back pain.

For this type of pain you might find the flexion and general mobility exercises are most helpful. If you’re finding this isn’t enough, feel free to reach out to me personally to discuss what other natural options you have for treating your arthritis pain.

Top 10 Exercises for Reducing Your Low Back Pain

About 60% of all Physical Therapy visits nation-wide are for the treatment of low-back or neck pain. This means we see A LOT of patients with back pain at Body Smart. We’ve figured out a few quick exercises you can try at home to turn the volume down on your low back pain.

Extension Based Exercises: Most often, back pain responds well to extension-based exercises. Extension-based exercises may help you if you have symptoms like these: pain with prolonged sitting or standing, an onset of pain related to bending, lifting or twisting, difficulty with pain in the morning that lessens with activity but increases with sitting. If these things describe your pain pattern, these exercises may be helpful.



PRONE ON ELBOWS - POE

Lying face down, slowly raise up and prop yourself up on your elbows.

Hold 1 Minute
Complete 3 Sets
Perform 6 Time(s) a Day



PRESS UPS

Lying face down, slowly raise up and arch your back using your arms.

Repeat 10 Times
Hold 4 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 6 Time(s) a Day



STANDING EXTENSIONS

While standing, place your hands on your hips and lean back to arch your back.

Repeat 10 Times
Hold 4 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 6 Time(s) a Day

If the pain is only on one side of your back you might try this exercise. Make sure you glide TOWARDS the side of your pain.



PELVIC SHIFT STANDING - WALL

While standing next to a wall, place your arm on a wall. Your other arm should be rested on your side as shown. Next, lean your waist and glide your pelvis towards the wall. This should cause a shifting at your pelvis to occur.

Repeat 10 Times
Hold 4 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 5 Time(s) a Day

Flexion based exercises are less common, but another pattern of pain which may fit you. If you have pain with standing or walking that's relieved by sitting, you're an older adult (>65), or you've been told you have degenerative disc disease or arthritis, you might find these exercises more helpful.



SINGLE KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH - SKTC

While Lying on your back, hold your knee and gently pull it up towards your chest.

Repeat 2 Times
Hold 30 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 3 Time(s) a Day



DOUBLE KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH - DKTC

While Lying on your back, hold your knees and gently pull them up towards your chest.

Repeat 3 Times
Hold 30 Seconds
Complete 3 Sets
Perform 5 Time(s) a Day



SEATED LOW BACK STRETCH

While sitting in a chair, slowly bend forward and reach your hands for the floor. Bend your trunk and head forward and down.

Repeat 10 Times
Hold 4 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 5 Time(s) a Day

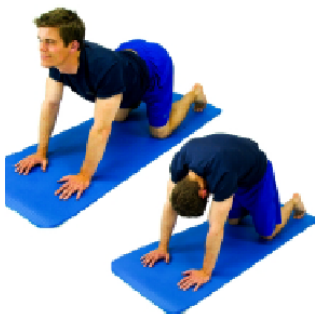
General Low Back Pain Exercises: If these pain patterns don't seem to fit you, or you've tried them and they aren't helping, you might try these approaches first to decrease your overall pain level and sensitivity to larger movements.



LOWER TRUNK ROTATIONS - LTR

Lying on your back with your knees bent, gently move your knees side-to-side.

Repeat 20 Times
Hold 3 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 5 Time(s) a Day



CAT AND CAMEL

While on your hands and knees in a crawl position, raise up your back and arch it towards the ceiling.

Next return to a lowered position and arch your back the opposite direction.

Repeat 20 Times
Hold 3 Seconds
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 5 Time(s) a Day



EXERCISE BALL - PELVIC TILTS

While sitting on an exercise ball, slowly arch and flatten your lower back.

Repeat 20 Times
Complete 2 Sets
Perform 3 Time(s) a Day

If you're struggling with low back pain, it can seem like you'll feel this pain forever. Trying these exercises often helps my patients find relief for their symptoms. You might just find that one of them is the ticket to keeping your pain at bay while your back heals.

If you can't find an exercise that works for you, then it's time to get more aggressive with relieving your symptoms. Come and see me at Body Smart and I can help get you on the right path. As a back pain expert, I'll help identify the right plan for getting you back to life with a natural solution – free of pain killers, surgery, or needless scans and physician visits.

How do I know when to see someone about my back pain?

Check out our quick quiz for learning when to come in and see a PT for your low back pain. It's a great screening tool for helping you to know if your pain will likely clear on its own or if you should seek treatment. Remember, if you have any doubt, get it checked out.

(Adapted from ***Treat Your Own Back*** by Robin McKenzie)

1. Are there periods in the day when you have no back pain? Even 10 minutes?
2. Is the pain confined to areas above the knee?
3. Are you generally worse while sitting for prolonged periods or when rising from a seated position?
4. Are you generally worse during or right after prolonged bending or stooping as in bed-making, ironing, vacuuming, concrete work, digging or gardening?
5. Are you generally worse when waking up in the morning, but improve after about a 1/2 hour?
6. Are you generally worse when inactive and better when on the move?
7. Are you generally better when walking?
8. Are you generally better when lying face down? When testing this you may feel worse for the first few minutes after which the pain subsides; in which case the answer is 'yes.'
9. Have you had several episodes of low back pain over the past months or years?
10. Between episodes, are you able to move fully in all directions without pain?
11. Between episodes are you pain free?
12. If you have pain in the buttocks, or the upper or lower leg, does it sometimes stop completely, even though you may still have pain in the back?

If you've answered 'yes' to all the questions, you might try the extension exercises or general mobility category from above. If it doesn't lessen within a few days seek help for proper evaluation and treatment.

If you answered 'yes' to >5 questions you would benefit from investigation into your low back pain from a back pain specialist like myself. Your pain isn't likely to resolve on its own in a short amount of time and may become a recurring problem. Let's quickly identify the cause of your pain and get you going with the most appropriate course of treatment.

If you answered 'yes' to <5 you should definitely seek more help for further investigation into your low back pain. Your symptoms are likely more involved and will require a thorough examination.

Conclusion

So there it is! An insight into the types of low back pain and some common solutions that have helped hundreds of my patients get relief. I know you likely still have some questions about your pain and may still be somewhat skeptical if you can get any relief. Hopefully you have a better understanding of your pain and how to decide if you should seek more help.

My hope is that sharing this guide with you is the beginning of a long relationship working together to help you improve your health, and avoid pain, immobility and surgery. My goal is to help you become Body Smart!

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Dedicated to your health,

Cameron Garber

Leading Doctor of Physical Therapy

Health Advice Disclaimer

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