

Keep your back in line

Your back is composed of three natural curves. When your three natural curves are properly aligned, your ears, shoulders and hips are in a straight line. Without support from strong, flexible muscles, your back loses its three natural curves. Poor posture can lead to pain and serious injury. Good posture and strong flexible muscles help prevent back strain and pain.

Always check with your health care provider before beginning any physical exercise, but with approval, consider the exercises found on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health's Web site. NIH suggests doing the following exercises 10 minutes a day to improve the strength and flexibility of your back and other muscles that give your back support.

Bridge — This exercise strengthens your low back:

- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- With arms lying at your sides, tighten stomach muscles, squeeze buttocks and slowly raise your hips into the air.
- Hold for five (5) seconds and then slowly bring the buttocks back to the floor. Repeat 20 times.

Wall slide — This exercise strengthens your back and leg muscles:

- Stand with your back against a wall and your feet slightly apart.
- Slide into a half-sit.
- Hold as long as you can and slide back up. Repeat five times.

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