

Jo's Top 5 tips for Back Care



1) Keep Mobile

I cannot emphasise how important this is- you need to keep your body moving freely but unfortunately in our modern world it is all so easy to end up stuck in one position and thus the soft tissue connections of your body tighten and your joints stiffen up.

Your spine needs to be mobilised in all planes of motion- just like we do in our Preparation Phase at the start of class. If you're seated for much of the day you also need to release off the hip flexors so that you reduce the compression forces in your lower back.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seated on a chair roll the shoulders back and down whilst inhaling to try and let the rib cage lift and release. • Lean back into the chair & let the arms float up and back. • Draw the abs in as you return to centre. • Do not let the head drop back <p>Repeat 3 times.</p> | <p>Seated Chest Stretch (Release the Chest and unlock the Rib Cage)</p> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit tall on your chair • Inhale and engage the pelvic floor muscles • As you exhale draw your abdominals in a little and turn to one side • Ensure you don't drop forwards • Come back to centre and repeat to the other side • Do not add momentum or try to push too far <p>Complete 6 times</p> | <p>Seated Rotations (Mobilise the Spinal Column, wake up the abdominals and back muscles)</p> |  |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit tall on your chair • Inhale and engage the pelvic floor muscles • As you exhale draw your abdominals in a little and reach down to one side • Come back to centre and repeat to the other side • Try to think of going up and over • Do not add momentum or try to push too far <p>Complete 6 times</p> | <p>Seated Side Reach (Mobilise the Spinal Column, stretch side the abdominals and back muscles)</p> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From standing step left leg back and line both feet up as if they were on train tracks • Now bend the left knee a little and squeeze hip forwards, tucking the pelvis under • Feel the stretch on the front of the left hip/thigh • Wait 10 seconds. • Repeat right side | <p>Hip Flexor Stretch (Hip Release)</p> |   |

2) Fire up your Glutes & Pelvic Floor Muscles

These 2 areas will give support and stability to your lower back which is vital in helping it transfer loading through the body safely and effectively. Try these 2 exercises:

Pilates Stance commences with small external rotation at the hip joints, coming down along the length of the legs, and ending with a narrow "V" shape in the feet as the heels squeeze together. It looks like this:



When we execute **Pilates Stance**, we ignite many muscles such as the external hip rotators, front thigh muscles and inner thighs which all give stability to the pelvic girdle.

Try it when you are stood in a queue to give your lower back extra support.

Standing Leg Pull

- Use the wall for support
- Inhale and draw up pelvic floor
- As you exhale tighten your waist & squeeze 1 leg back
- Ensure the buttock muscles fires before the back of the thigh(hamstring)
- Keep the chest lifted
- Do not arch your back!

Repeat 4 times slowly each side



3)Maintain a Healthy Weight

I know- I can hear you groaning at me- but it is so important to try and keep our weight within healthy guidelines if you suffer with your back. I'm not talking being super skinny here- but extra weight will not only alter your posture and therefore affect the muscles and ligaments that support the spinal column potentially causing pain or dis-comfort, but it will also put extra strain on the joints themselves.

Food For Thought

“For every four pounds you lose, you remove 16 pounds of pressure from your spine”

In one study, the risk of developing osteoarthritis dropped 50 percent with each 11-pound weight loss. Worth re-visiting your nutrition plan for? I think so!

4)Maintain Hydration

Between every two vertebrae lies a disc, which functions as a shock absorber. This intervertebral disc has two parts: an outer, flexible but very tough ring, which is filled with a gelatinous substance, called the nucleus pulposis. The inner substance is primarily water.

All day, as gravity pulls on our upright spine, water is slowly squeezed out of the discs. We need to ensure we are hydrated enough so that when we go to bed at night and lie down our discs can be re-hydrated.

If we fail to do this regularly then we will not have the same amount of shock absorption and therefore are open to more wear and tear.

5) Release Spasm in the Kinetic Chains of the Body.

Your body is a mass of connective tissue called fascia that connects one area to another- There are some very well recognised strong connections such as from one hip to the opposite shoulder when the body compensates for dysfunction in one area by literally taking up the slack and causing a dysfunction/pain in a related area. It can for example be affected by postural changes due to such things as being desk based all day, carry infants on one side of the body etc.

Luckily there are some simple home management methods you can use to help.

Tennis Ball Wall Massage for Hip, Shoulder & Back

You can use the tennis ball to help loosen off some of the muscles that support the pelvis which can in turn lead to better alignment and relief of hip and sciatic pain. You can also explore other tight areas such as the back and shoulder, which are linked to the alignment of the body via their soft tissue connections.

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| <p>Use your tennis ball to massage out the buttocks and shoulder area-paying particular attention to any "sweet spots". This is great to do if you have had a busy day either carrying children around or playing sports(or carrying shopping!)</p> | <p>Tennis Ball Releases</p> <p>Aim to massage them morning and evening for around 20 seconds or until the tension starts to dissipate.</p> |  |
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As ever if you are struggling with acute back pain you NEED to visit a clinical practitioner to get a full diagnosis.

If you need practical help then we have specialist Back Care Pilates sessions plus Seated and Standing Therapy Pilates sessions to help you learn the techniques in this article.

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www.betterbodypilates.co.uk

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