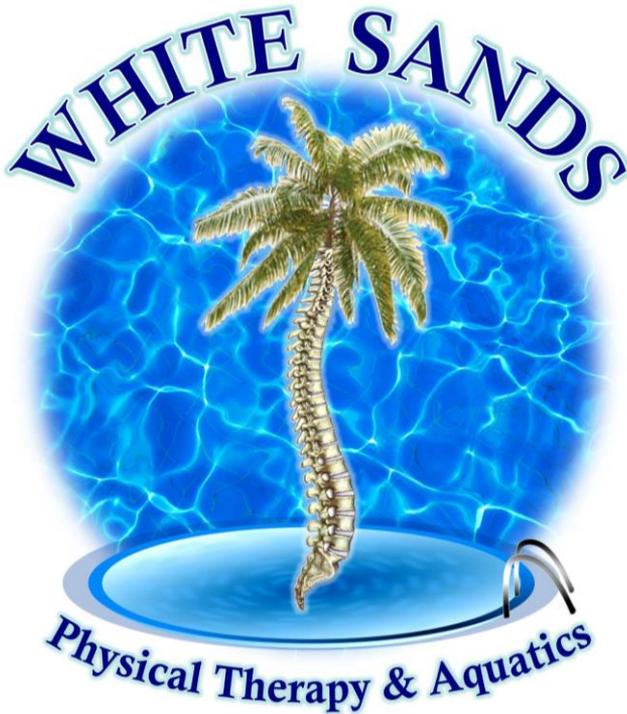


White Sands' Guide for a Healthy Back



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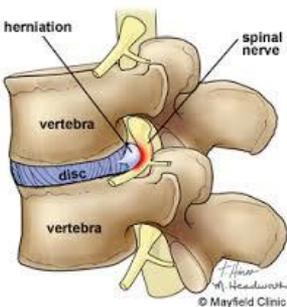
www.aquaticsphysicaltherapy.com

Home of the Spinal Solutions Program

What Causes Back Pain?

Since the lower area of the spine (lumbar) bears the most weight with our movements, the discs in this area are more prone to disc herniation or degeneration which can lead to low back pain or pain radiating into the legs and feet. This pain can be caused by habitual poor posture, overstretching of ligaments or tendons, osteoporosis, or an acute injury such as a fall or car accident.

The spine is cushioned by discs, which are round and flat with a tough outer shell that surrounds a jelly-like material, the nucleus. When discs are healthy, they act as shock absorbers for the spine, keeping the spine flexible. When discs are damaged by injury, disease or the normal wear and tear associated with aging, they may bulge or rupture and become a herniated disc (sometimes called a slipped or ruptured disc).



Often a herniated disc by itself does not cause any discomfort. Pain occurs when the herniated disc material presses on the nerve roots or spinal cord.

What Is Decompression?

Spinal decompression is a non- surgical solution to relieving back pain. It produces a gentle stretch of the spine.

The spine includes the individual vertebrae and the cushiony discs in between. Often times when these discs become herniated or bulging, they will press on the spinal nerves which can cause symptoms of pain into the legs.

Spinal decompression relieves the pressure on these spinal nerves by gently stretching the spine and allowing more room for the discs to move back where they belong.

This treatment will help to treat: Herniated/Bulging Disc, Degenerative Disc Disease, Spinal Stenosis, Facet Joint Arthropathy and Sciatica.

Spinal Decompression is not for everyone. Our Therapists will determine if spinal decompression will benefit our patients. Our clinic utilizes spinal decompression through our KDT and VAX-D machines, and also in our 93° pool.

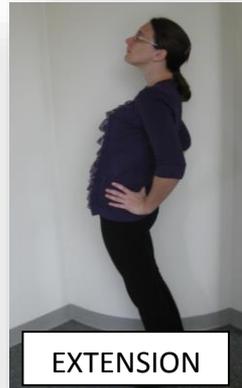


Spinal Disc Dynamics

Flexion is the act of bending forward so your nose is closer to your toes. This increases pressure on the front of the spine, which pushes the gel inside the disc backwards and increases pressure on nervous tissues which causes pain.

** Sitting or bending forward may relieve pain temporarily, *however* excessive sitting and/or bending forward will typically make matters worse in the long term.

Extension is the act of bending slightly backwards. This reduces pressure on the front of the spine and increases pressure on the back of the spine which can coax disc material forward and decrease pressure on nervous tissues.

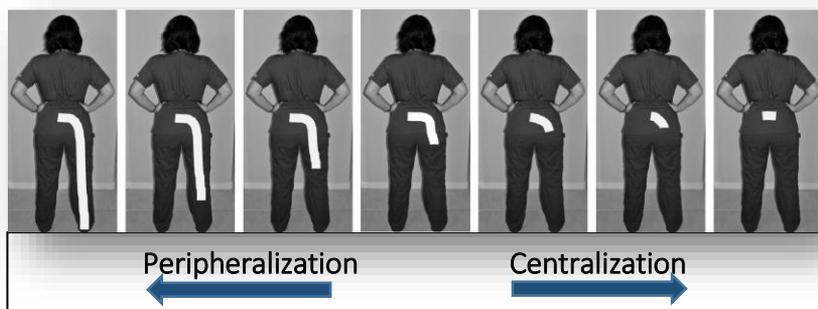


Types of Pain:

Centralization vs. Peripheralization

There are some people who experience symptoms of spinal injuries in places other than the low back. These symptoms can include pain, tingling, burning, numbness, and sometimes weakness in the legs. When symptoms radiate into the buttocks and/or legs, it is called peripheralization or radicular pain. (This means that more pressure is being placed on that nerve and the further it goes down the leg, the more it is said to peripheralize.)

The opposite of this, called centralization, is when the pain begins to recede up the leg and becomes localized in the low back. If the pain moves closer to your low back, that is a good sign! This usually means that your condition is improving and you are having less pressure placed on the nerve root. When centralization occurs, you may feel slightly more pain in the low back than you had before. This is still a good sign because the symptoms are no longer going into the legs.



Spinal Solutions Program: Posture

Good posture is crucial when it comes to reducing back pain.

Standing

You should stand with your feet hip width apart, shoulders square, back straight, stomach in, hips and knees neutral and put equal weight on both feet. If you stand with your back against the wall, the back of your head, shoulders and buttocks should be touching the wall.



With any standing activity, try to tighten your abdominal muscles by pulling in your belly button towards your spine. This will help your posture and protect your back. Just don't forget to breathe!

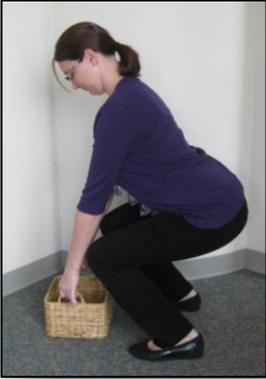
Sitting

You should sit with your back against the chair with a small pillow or towel roll in the arch of the low back (proper lumbar support). (Align your ears over your shoulders and shoulders over your hips.) Keeping both feet flat on the ground, your knees and hips should be at a 90° angle.



Tips to Avoid Back Pain

- Avoid lifting, twisting, and bending (and any combination of these!



- If you must lift something, follow these guidelines: Get as close as you can to the object. Bend your knees, keep your heels on the ground and lift with your legs to pick it up. Keep it as close to your body as you can. Never twist! Always turn by pivoting your feet.

- Avoid changing the sheets, sweeping, and vacuuming because these activities involve bending and twisting at the same time.

- No golf or tennis until therapy is over since both involve bending and twisting of the spine!

- Limit sitting to no more than 20-30 minutes at a time. If you must sit, try to get up every 20 minutes and walk around for a couple of minutes or try some standing extensions.



Tips to Avoid Back Pain

- Only sit in a recliner if it has good lumbar support. If you are going to recline, recline your chair to approximately 30° with the leg rest half-way up. This position has been proven to be the least stressful on your back.



- If you must travel and will be sitting for long periods of time, try to take breaks to stand up and perform a standing extension. Try a rolled up towel or lumbar pillow to support your low back.

- Be sure to consult with your doctor or therapist before using heat and/or ice to help relieve your pain. Ice would be ideal, especially if there is any inflammation in your back. Try an ice pack on your back for no longer than 20 minutes.

- Stop doing additional exercises and stretches if you are attending therapy. This includes yoga, bicycling and any other activity that involves flexion of the spine, or bringing the knees closer to the chest. We prefer that you take a break from these other activities so that we can help your body to heal first.

Spinal Solution Program:

Exercises for Back Pain

In order to reverse the disc distortion/bulging, you need to spend more time in good postures and perform a back extension exercise each hour (this may be any type of extension we teach).

If you have increased pain with these exercises, especially if pain starts to radiate down the leg, discontinue the exercise. This goes for *any* activity that you do! Stop the activity immediately if it causes increased pain, tingling or numbness and consult with a Physical Therapist who specializes in back pain prior to continuing the activity.

*Patients must consult with a Physical Therapist or Health Care provider before beginning any of the following exercises.

Extension Exercises:

Abdominal Sets: To achieve this exercise, try to bring your belly button toward your spine, or suck your belly in as if you are trying to put on a tight pair of pants. If you blow out a candle these muscles will automatically contract. Try to do this exercise throughout your day in any position. Do not hold your breath!

Prone laying: Lay face down. While in this position take slow deep breaths and relax the muscles of the low back as much as possible for 3 minutes prior to moving on to the next exercise.

Prone Abdominal Sets: While laying on your belly, tighten the Abdominals and hold for 5-10 seconds while still continuing to breathe. Try to work up to holding the belly in for up to 2 minutes.

Prone on Elbows: Position yourself as shown in the picture, flat on your stomach with elbows underneath shoulders. Make sure that your buttocks and back muscles are completely relaxed. Stay in this position for 2-4 minutes.

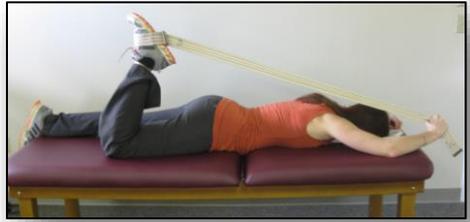


Passive prone extension: Using your sofa and/or pillows, build a wedge to put under your upper torso. Keep your hips on the ground or bed and elevate your upper body.



Relax in this position for 3 minutes and work up to 15 minutes if it helps.

Hip Flexor Stretches: On your stomach (with a pillow under your hips if needed), place the end of a strap or belt around your foot and pull the strap while bending the knee until you feel a stretch in



the front of the thigh. You should feel a moderate stretch, back off if this increases your low back pain. Hold position 30 seconds and do 3 reps.



Standing Extensions: Stand as shown with hands on low back. Keeping your knees straight, bend *slightly* backwards and hold this position 5-10 seconds. Then stand up straight (don't bend forward!) for 5-10 seconds and repeat for 1-2 minutes. If you start to have more than a small increase in low back pain *or* if you have pain radiating into buttocks or thighs, stop the exercise.

REMEMBER! Back pain does have a tendency to return. The main reason is believed to be due to insufficient rehabilitation and lack of continued attention to proper posture, body mechanics and strengthening/stretching exercises. The good news is *you* can significantly decrease the chances that your back pain and/or lower extremity pain will return by following the advice in this guide provided by White Sands Physical Therapy & Aquatics.

White Sands Physical Therapy and Aquatics has become known for our success in solving even the most persistent back and sciatic type symptoms. We utilize the Spinal Solutions Program, which eliminates the need for most injections and surgery. By using this protocol which includes warm water aquatic therapy, manual techniques and exercises and computerized decompression, we have been able to relieve or eliminate our patient's back pain. For more information about how you can help reduce your back pain, please contact us.



Visit our website for more tips!
www.aquaticsphysicaltherapy.com

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*This packet is not intended to diagnose or treat any medical conditions. Please see your health care provider prior to beginning any of these exercises.