



Health Advice

Understanding your back better

Almost everyone is familiar with back pain; over 80 per cent of all adults have suffered from back pain at least once, with many experiencing it time and again. For some, it's their neck and shoulder areas that tend to tense up, while for others it's their lower back that hurts. Insufficient exercise, but also lifting objects that are too heavy or lifting things the wrong way can lead to back pain. Sometimes the causes lie elsewhere, however: did you know, for example, that stress, your eyes, your breathing, and even your tongue can also affect your back?

The first step in taking action against back problems is usually what you don't really feel like doing when you're experiencing pain: physical exercise. The best approach is to start gently. An Australian study showed that regular walks prevent back pain and reduce its rate of recurrence. Targeted back exercises and an ergonomic workstation are also very helpful. People who want to do their back even more good are advised to take a more holistic approach: studies have shown that a personalised exercise routine works best to prevent back pain when the factor of mental health is taken into account at the same time. After all, in some cases it isn't a person's back that's the real problem – stress, conflicts at work or a high workload can also exacerbate or trigger back pain.

Good stress management is also good for your back

Our nervous system is highly sensitive; when we are tense or overwhelmed, it also affects the body: our sleep suffers, we feel stressed and we clench our teeth – all of which leads to tension, which can manifest itself in the form of neck or back pain. To prepare yourself for stressful periods, adopt some relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation, meditation for a greater degree of inner peace and serenity, or “cognitive breaks”.

Exercise: Get a timer and take a break of at least five minutes after 30 minutes of concentration: stand up, open the window, gaze into the distance and breathe consciously: breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for four seconds, then breathe out for four seconds and hold your breath again for four seconds. Repeat this exercise several times. When you breathe in, it's also important not to raise your shoulders.

Breathe into your back for more relaxation

During their stressful working days, people often breathe far too superficially instead of deep into their torso. This can also lead to tension in their back.

Exercise: Lie on your back (before getting up in the morning, for example) and place one hand on your lower abdomen. Breathe in and out into your torso so that your hand rises and falls. Next, place your hands on the sides of your ribs and breathe into your hands – don't worry, your back may crack slightly as minor tensions are released.

Fighting neck pain with the eyes and tongue

Your eye movements and tongue are closely linked to your neck and back muscles. Make your neck more relaxed with this exercise for your eyes and tongue.

Exercise: Stick your tongue straight out, then position your outstretched tongue in the right-hand corner of your mouth and gently push it outwards. At the same time, direct your gaze to the left in the opposite direction. Keep your head in the same position throughout. Change sides by placing your tongue in the left-hand corner of your mouth and gazing to the right at the same time. Alternate back and forth slowly for one minute.

An extra tip for people who wear glasses

Wear workplace glasses when working at your PC instead of varifocals. This is because, to find the best point of focus when wearing varifocals, you have to move your head unnaturally frequently and hold it in special positions, which can lead to tension. Well-adjusted workplace glasses, on the other hand, allow you to position your head in the natural way – and therefore have a more relaxed neck.

Back care: How to promote a healthy back

A healthy back provides more than just the basis for pain-free movement – it's key to leading an active and energetic life. Find out how back pain develops, what types of complaints exist and what really helps to relieve these. Prevent tension and discomfort, and strengthen your back muscles with a range of exercises that you can do from home or at work.



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