

Exercise for Bad Backs: Take Control of Your Back Pain with Belmar Chiropractic Clinic

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DID YOU KNOW THAT 70% OF PEOPLE will experience back pain at least once in their life? And of those people who have experienced a bout of back pain, 50-60% will have a recurrence or experience a total relapse of their condition within 1 year. The main reason is incomplete care.^{1,2,3}

Surprisingly, most back pain does not result from some specific traumatic event, rather the pain just came on with no known cause or after performing some simple activity of daily living like taking out the garbage.^{4,5,6} So the question isn't "What's the straw that broke the camel's back?" (pardon the pun) but "What are the preceding 99 straws?" Researchers have attributed the main risk factor as being **Disturbed Neuromuscular Control**.^{7,8} This basically means that people who suffer back pain more often have a poor "brain-back" connection. This deficiency is most obviously represented in single leg balancing with eyes open and closed. Try it for yourself next to a wall so that you can catch yourself if necessary. Also try standing heel-to-toe with eyes open and then closed. Then reverse the positioning of your feet and try again first with eyes open then with eyes closed. Did you sway much doing this simple exercise? Did you find that you did better when one foot was forward versus the other? This may indicate your neuromuscular deficiency is worse on a specific side of the body.

When this "brain-back" connection is deconditioned, the last straw to send you into debilitating back pain may be a simple UNCOORDINATED movement. Although the following analogy is not perfect I use it as an association for patients. Having **Disturbed Neuromuscular Control** is like biting your lip while eating. When it happens you think, "How the heck did I do that?" A task as simple as chewing your food requires an incredible amount of muscular control from your brain; the tongue, lips and chewing muscles must move in just the right pattern to keep everything but the food out of the way of your teeth. When the brain fails at controlling this complex task, the movements do not coordinate correctly and you bite your lip. Ouch!

So how do we make our backs smarter with better neuromuscular control and, thereby, reduce our chances of re-injury? The answer lies in performing a specific balancing and core stabilizing exercise program that is customized to fit your needs.^{9,10} Since painful neck conditions "run similar courses" specific rehab programs should also be performed for the cervical spine.^{11,9} At Belmar Chiropractic Clinic almost every patient's treatment plan includes some customized exercise program to not only help them feel better but to *stay* better. Compliance with such recommendations saves time, results in fewer patient visits overall and ultimately saves you money!

Lastly, it is very important NOT to start a therapeutic exercise program before your body is ready. I love physical therapists but many of my patients have come to me after trying physical therapy saying they were pushed into doing exercises that were too hard, too soon and actually made their pain worse. Exercising with pain will actually make a back condition worse because it will ensure that patterns of *incorrect*

neuromuscular control persist.¹⁰ One must not casually throw around the cliché, “No Pain, No Gain”. This is a very destructive attitude! Yes, athletes must endure some discomfort in training to breakdown muscle unit connections so that repair and hypertrophy can take place, but this philosophy **must not** be generalized to therapeutic exercise rehabilitation protocols. Your spine stabilizing system, which is comprised of your joints, ligaments, muscles and discs, must be first be operating optimally.⁷ Once your pain and joint dysfunction start becoming controlled we carefully move into your therapeutic exercise program. This is accomplished via the use of several therapeutic modalities. The two most powerful techniques used to decrease pain, turn on the spine stabilizing system and help you perform your customized exercise program from a biomechanically correct platform are Biomedical Acupuncture™ and chiropractic spinal manipulation. Biomedical Acupuncture™ helps break pain cycles and stimulate tissue healing to a normal state. Chiropractic Spinal Manipulation stimulates joints to reset faulty signals¹², restores better range of motion and corrects improper alignment of the joints and muscles. So take care of yourself, get on a customized balance and core strengthening program and don't just *feel* better, **BE** better!

References

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