

October 2008

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Ask the Expert: Relieving back pain



Q: I suffer from muscle aches and stiffness in my lower back. I notice it is much worse when I do not exercise for a few days. What are some safe exercises and stretches to help with lower back pain?

A: Low back pain affects many Americans, especially those who sit at a desk, spend long hours in the car, and spend time on a computer. All of those positions put our spine in forward flexion. Long hours in forward flexion results in weak abdominals, tight hamstrings, overworked back muscles and in short: Back Pain! Here are a few exercises that can be done on a daily basis to help reduce low back pain. *Remember, you should always follow the advice of your health care provider, especially if you have a diagnosed back condition.*

- **Forward Bend:** First, standing with feet shoulder width apart, hinge forward at the hip with slightly bent knees and reach toward the toes. The hip is a ball and socket joint, the back is not! The hip is made to forward bend, the back is not! Breathe deeply here for 20 seconds. Squeeze the abs and use your legs to bring you back upright. Repeat this 3-4 times and throughout the day.

- **Ab Crunch:** Lay on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor. Place hands behind the head to support the neck or cross arms on the chest. Flatten the space between your low back and the floor. **HOLD** while you bring the shoulder blades off the floor, squeezing the abs. Exhale on the way up and inhale on the way down. Re-

member to keep the neck in alignment and keep a space the size of a grapefruit between your chin and your chest. Repeat 10-30 times. Do every other day. Again, the back is tight from sitting and the abs are weak from poor posture; bringing the spine into imbalance. This imbalance can cause low back pain.

- **Cobra:** Laying on your tummy, squeeze the muscles of the upper spine to pull the chest off the floor. This yoga pose strengthens the back and is a good pose to counter sitting all day. Breathe deeply here for 20 seconds and repeat throughout the day.

Practicing these exercises along with your regular work-out routine can help prevent low back pain. Remember exercise in general is not just healthy for your heart, but it is the key to proper body mechanics.

— Carrie Davidson, ACSM HFI, Wellness Coordinator

Calendar

Bike Ed Commuting Class

Considering riding your bike to work? Learn how to bike safely with Michael Galbraith, League Cycling Instructor. The Bike Ed Commuting Class demonstrates basic, on-road riding skills and strategies for route and gear selection. Class size is limited! To see class dates and register, visit the Web site at www.uky.edu/HR/wellness/bikeclass.html.

Good Health on a Budget: Fall Lunch & Learn Series

Please join us for lunch-time sessions geared toward keeping you healthy and well at work and at home. Each session is free and will cover a different topic. Light refreshments will be provided, but feel free to bring your lunch. All sessions are held from 12:10-12:50 p.m., in the Lexmark Room, Main Building. To register, visit the Web site at www.uky.edu/HR/wellness/lunchandlearn.html.

Join us for FREE UK Work-Life Events

UK Health & Wellness is proud to partner with UK Work-Life in a series of free events for staff and faculty. These events are part of UK's observance of National Work and Family Month in October. Featured luncheons and workshops focus on everything from understanding generational differences in the workplace to managing stress and much more. For details, visit www.uky.edu/HR/WorkLife/workandfamily-month2008.htm.

The right way to lose weight: Weight Loss Matters

Why wait for the New Year? Now is the perfect time to make the commitment to lose weight by joining the UK Health and Wellness Weight Loss Matters program. New classes begin Tuesday, Oct. 28, and Thursday, Oct. 30. Registration deadline is Oct. 24. For more information, visit www.uky.edu/HR/wellness/weight-lossmatters.html.

Meet October's Membership Specialist



Rob Sinnott, CSCS, PFT

New to the Body Shop? Have questions? Rob is a Graduate Assistant for Health & Wellness who is here to help you. Feel free to ask him questions, offer suggestions, or set up a time to get oriented to the Body Shop facilities. You can find him in both facilities or you can reach him at healthandwellness@email.uky.edu. You can also read his -- and other staff profiles -- at <http://www.uky.edu/HR/wellness/profiles.html>.