

Personal Training by Robert J. Bovee

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HOW EXERCISE WILL HELP LOWER BACK PROBLEMS

One of the major obstacles facing a person when recovering from an injury is the possibility of re-injury. This is especially true when recovering from low back problems. Re-injury may occur because of inadequate reconditioning and lack of rehabilitative exercise.

When an injury forces a layoff, as most low back injuries do, the muscles weaken and there is a decrease in muscle tone, size and strength. If an individual recovering from an injury tries to jump right back into a normal every day activity without a period of rehabilitation, the chance of re-injury is greatly increased. Remember that it may take 6 - 8 weeks or longer to fully rehabilitate a low back injury. In the case of disc damage, it may take several months of intensive rehabilitative exercise before strength, flexibility and full function are restored.

In general, rehabilitation should begin as soon as possible after the injury. Remember to always check with your physician and consult with a certified professional trainer before starting a rehabilitation program. In short, the first few weeks of your rehabilitation program should be spent emphasizing flexibility and range of motion through the use of non-resistance exercises such as:

- 1) **Pelvic tilt** - Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles and try to press your lower back to the floor. Hold for a count of five and release.
- 2) **Double leg pull** - Lie flat on your back with your legs extended. Slowly pull your knees to your chest and hold for a count of five.
- 3) **Partial curl-up** - Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor. Cross your arms over your chest and tuck in your chin. Tighten your abdominal muscles and gently curl your body halfway up. Hold for a count of three and slowly curl back down.

If an exercise causes additional pain, immediately stop doing this and try something else. Once flexibility is restored, you should begin a series of resistance training exercises. These programs should be set up by a certified professional trainer who insures that your weights be no heavier than **40 - 50 %** of your maximum and that repetitions be kept high, in the **15 - 20** range. If you can't perform **15** reps, then the resistance is too high. The idea of this part of your rehabilitation cycle is to concentrate on strict form while rebuilding muscle strength and endurance. This type of light resistance program should be followed for at least **4 - 6** weeks.

Many injuries suffered by the elderly are a result of the aging process. With a properly designed resistance training program, strength levels can easily be doubled, reversing the deterioration of the muscles and bone, protecting individuals against further injuries. Our trainers have been educated and trained to design fitness programs for back injury rehabilitation as well as rehabilitation for various other muscle, bone and soft tissue injuries. In most cases, I consult with an individual's physician to accurately design a comprehensive program for the case presented.

For more information, please contact Robert J. Bovee at **(585) 330-0614**.