

**tip** Exercise isn't just for strengthening and preventing injury. In many cases, it also may help relieve certain types of back pain. Going about your usual activities, as tolerated, may help relieve stiffness and pain.

Moving your body not only keeps blood and nutrients flowing, it helps reduce inflammation and muscle tension. Just be sure to check with your doctor before you start an exercise program for a sore back. He or she can tell you which exercises, and how much, may be helpful.

But, you should seek immediate medical care if your back pain:

- Causes you to faint or feel lightheaded
- Triggers severe or intense pain, weakness, numbness or tingling in one or both legs
- Brings on new bowel or bladder problems
- Is associated with fever or abdominal pain or throbbing
- Follows a fall, blow or other injury to your back

Also, see your doctor if you have:

- Persistent back pain despite treatment
- A history of cancer
- Other symptoms along with your back pain

## Focus on: Healthy back

Current Article

### Make some smart moves to help prevent back pain

When it comes to back pain, the best remedy is stopping it before it starts. So, consider this prescription for prevention: exercise. That's right — simple moves you can do at home may help you keep motion-related back pain at bay.

#### Why exercise helps

Regular exercise can help improve your overall fitness and may decrease the chances of back injuries. Talk with your doctor, however, before beginning any exercise program.

Certain types of activity are especially beneficial when it comes to your back:

- Strengthening exercises, including core strengthening and resistance



training, build up the muscles that provide support for your body.

- Stretching may improve the extension of muscles and other soft tissues, which can reduce stiffness.

#### Putting prevention into practice

Begin by talking with your doctor about how much and what type of exercise to do. Based on what he or she says, you may want to choose exercises that strengthen the muscles that support your back. The following exercises offered by the North American Spine Society may help you get started:

**Press up.** Lie on your stomach, with your hands touching the ground, under your shoulders. Push up, trying to straighten your elbows, while keeping your legs and hips on the floor. Using your arms for support, arch your back gently. You should feel the stretch in your chest and stomach. Hold, then slowly lower back down. Repeat 10 times.

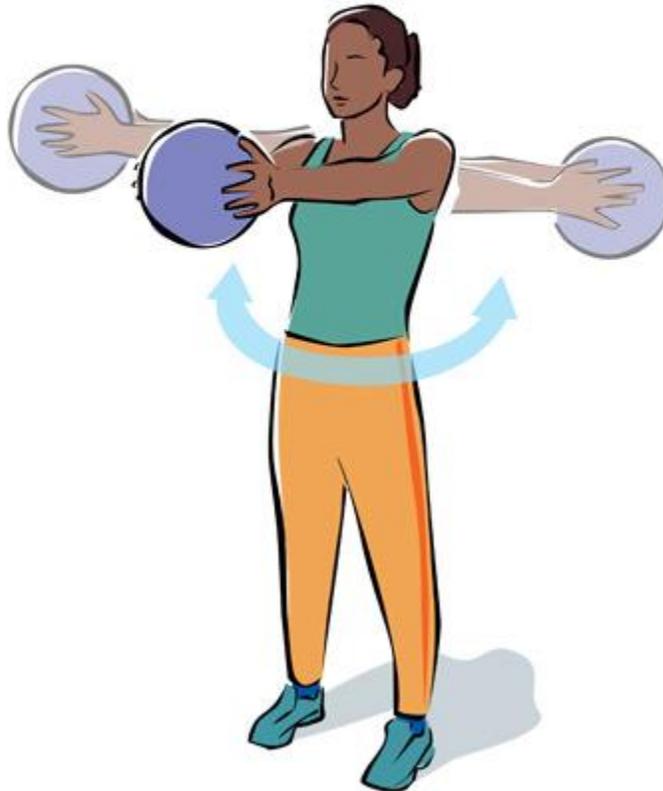
### Press Ups



**Transverse core strengthening.** This exercise strengthens the muscles that help support you as you stand. Hold a ball with both hands directly in front of you, with

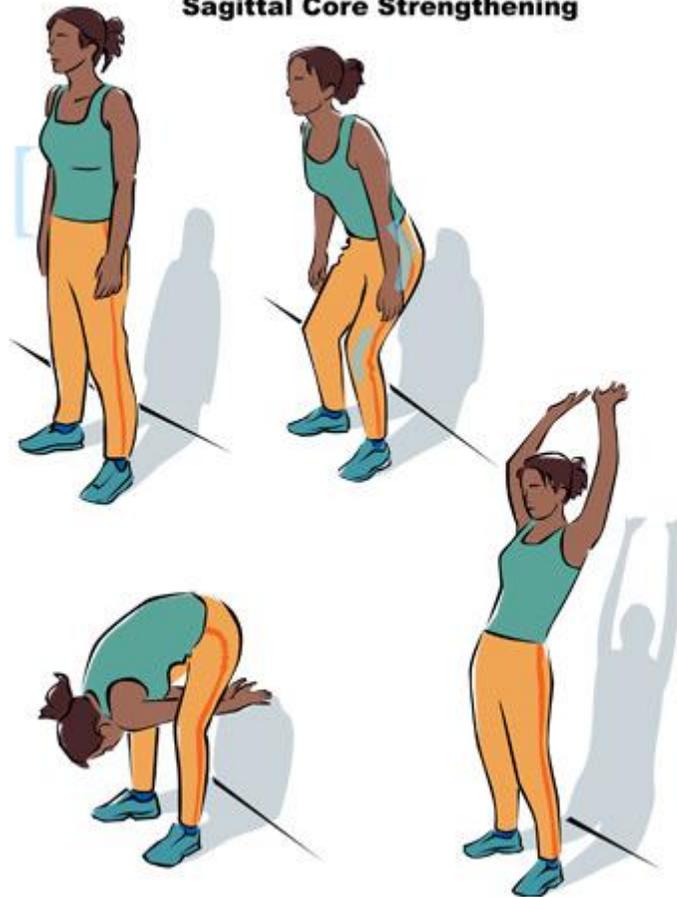
your feet shoulder-width apart. Tighten your abdominal muscles, keep your feet flat on the floor, and rotate from side to side, keeping the ball straight in front of you. Repeat 10 times.

### **Transverse Core Strengthening**



**Sagittal core strengthening.** This move stretches and strengthens the low back muscles that help you stand and lift. Stand about 1.5 feet away from a wall, with your back to it. Place your feet shoulder-width apart and tighten your stomach muscles. Bend your hips and knees, and reach through your legs to touch the wall. Straighten your hips to bring yourself back to a standing position. As you do so, bring your arms out from between your legs and extend them up over your head and slightly backward. Repeat 10 times.

## Sagittal Core Strengthening



**Backward bending.** This exercise is especially helpful if you've been sitting at a desk for a long period of time. Stand up, feet shoulder-width apart and toes turned slightly out. Place your hands on your backside just below the waist. Gently bend backward, first with your head, then shoulders and back. As you do this, move your hips forward for balance. Slowly return to an upright position. Repeat 10 times. In addition to exercise, it's important to remember these tips to help prevent back injuries:

- Practice good posture.
- Maintain a healthful weight.
- Avoid lifting heavy items, when you can. If you must lift something heavy, be sure to keep your back straight and lift by putting the stress on your legs and hips. Don't bend over the item.

## Backward Bending

