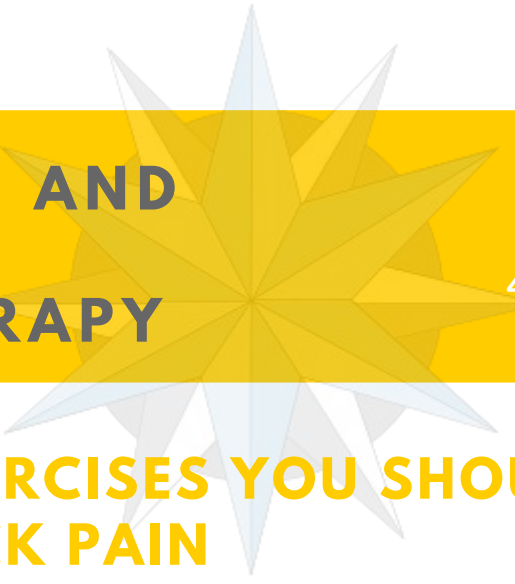




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10 PILATES EXERCISES YOU SHOULDN'T DO IF YOU HAVE BACK PAIN

These mat home exercises are commonly suggested for use with back pain. Please only do them if your physiotherapist has assessed your abilities and control. For most people with back pain they are not the most suitable Pilates exercises to attempt and should be avoided.

THE STANDING ROLL-UP

A great beginner exercises BUT most people with chronic back pain have very tight hamstrings, a weak core, and poor hip mechanics and no idea how to segmentally articulate the spine. In addition, hanging forward in this position places more stress on the low back, especially if you do not have the core support to bend you forward and roll you back up..

THE FLOOR ROLL UP

A classical Pilates Matwork exercise that for many avid Pilates students is very challenging to do correctly! If you have back pain, this exercise is another one that can place additional unnecessary strain on the low back. Again, with a weak core, tight hamstrings, and poor hip mechanics, the chances of this helping your back feel better are minimal, the chances of it aggravating your back pain, 95-100%. There are much safer exercise options you could learn to modify the Roll-up, and get all of the right parts of your body stronger and more flexible the most difficult place to execute it is on the floor. There are versions on the Pilates Reformer and on the Pilates Trapeze Table that provide support and assistance to improve articulation, strength, and mobility.

ROLL LIKE A BALL

If you have back issues, chances are you're going to thud, not roll, or pull with your arms, throw your head and get whiplash, or kick with your knees and feet in an attempt to roll which negates finding the support you really need for a good ball shape. If your low back is tight, and your low abs are weak, most of your round at the moment is in the upper back and shoulders. This lack of balance for a rounded C-Curve of the spine is typical for all new Pilates students, But for some back issues, this rolling exercise should NEVER be in your workout!



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HUNDRED(S)

Lots of controversy in the Pilates community on the spine position for this exercise. And how it is taught. There is a classical Pilates version with a scooped pelvis to keep the lower back firmly anchored to the mat, and a more contemporary version with the pelvis in a more “neutral” position. For most people, the back muscles will probably be working harder than the front of the belly. Yes, core support involves both the abs and the back muscles; it’s about finding the proper balance. The Hundred exercise will be easier if the knees stay bent, and is more difficult with straight legs. If you want the safest version to get started, keep your knees bent and BOTH feet on the floor.

BRIDGE ROLL UPS

If students experience back pain, with bridging exercises they usually lift right up into the pain, and don’t know how to find the right support to get the exercise out of their back pain point. Yes this is a great back strengthening exercise, works to open the hip flexors and strengthen the hamstrings, as well as articulate the spine, but only if done correctly. Finding the right firing pattern to activate the pelvic floor, and lengthen out towards the knees as you lift, will make this a much safer exercise. If it hurts, you’re not doing it correctly, don’t push through the pain.

SUPERMAN

For most people ALL the lifting is coming from the lumbar spine. The low back is doing ALL the work, rather than distributing the work evenly throughout the entire spine. There are better posterior chain exercises for hip extension and improving back strength.

SWIMMING

Swimming is an intermediate Pilates Mat exercise. However, just like the Superman, if you don’t know how to distribute the work correctly through the whole back, this is not going to be a happy back exercise. It would be much better to begin doing the arms and legs separately and work up to the full exercise. Proper leg and hip mechanics play a vital role in supporting the low back to lift the leg. Lying on your stomach can be a nice way to find the stability of your pelvis, and proper movement of the leg from the hip.



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THE DEAD BUG

It's a great exercise IF you have a strong back and core... But with everything up in the air, and arms and legs moving away from center, there's a really great chance that you're going to arch your back every time a leg lowers or arm goes over head. And this is only going to make your back pain worse. Which is why Pilates equipment is so important! You can do versions of this movement with more assistance and support, until you are strong enough to do it on your own.

SWAN

If you are rconsidering this exercise DON'T ROCK! It is too easy to push up into the lifted upper body position with your arms, rather than really articulating and activating the upper spine to balance the lift through the whole back. If you can't do a well-articulated lift- lengthening your spine to lift from the back of your t-shirt to your waist lifting slowly and lowering yourself back down to flat on the mat using your back muscles more than your arms, then - DON'T ROCK!

SINGLE LEG SPLIT

If you have chronic back pain, having all your limbs up in the air means zero stability for your back. If you don't have the flexibility to curl your head and neck up to the bottom of your shoulder blades, you're weak link to stay lifted might be neck strain. If you've got very tight hamstrings, there's a chance you're going to tuck your hips, or hike a hip to lift your leg up. And even worse, without good core support, as one straight leg lowers away from the body, your back will arch, and create more strain on your low back. Modify it to get started. Keep one knee bent and foot flat on the mat. Grab the lifted leg with both hands, and pull your abs in to gently pull the straight leg up towards you. Set the lifted leg down BEFORE lifting the other leg to help support your back and keep your hips still. And if you're hamstrings are too tight for you to grab 1 straight leg, there's a real justifiable reason for your chronic back pain. Flexibility is your friend, more hamstring and calf stretching is needed as part of your exercise plan

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