

Back Care

Stretch the Pain Away



Back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and it will affect as much as 80 percent of the population at some point in their lifetimes. While research continues to show that massage is of great benefit to the back-pain sufferer, there are other things you can do to ward off the pain, including stretching. Here are some simple active isolated stretches (an approach developed by Aaron Mattes) to keep your back healthy between massage appointments.

PSOAS STRETCH

In this active isolated stretch, begin in a lunge with your hip stacked over your knee. With your core engaged and your posture erect, begin to lunge forward. When you reach the end point of this stretch, hold for 2 seconds. Release. Repeat.



SPINAL FLEXION

Begin by sitting on the floor with your knees bent and feet apart. Bring your chin to your chest and round the upper back as you move downward into the stretch. Think about trying to touch your nose to your belly button. You can assist this stretch by gently grasping the lower legs and pulling yourself farther. Hold for 2 seconds, release, and repeat.



SPINAL EXTENSION

Lie facedown on the floor. Place your forehead on your crisscrossed arms. Lift your chest away from the mat. Hold for 2 seconds, release, then repeat.



SPINAL EXTENSION PART DEUX

Lie facedown on the floor. With your hands placed palm-down under the shoulders, use your back muscles to move into what looks like a cobra pose in yoga. At the end range of the stretch, use your arms to push a little farther and hold for 2 seconds. Release. Repeat.



Your 32-Pound Head

Looking for the causes of your back pain? Maybe it's your forward-head posture. For every inch of forward-head posture, the weight of the head on the spine increases by 10 pounds. A normal 12-pound head gains 20 pounds when it sits forward on the spine 2 inches. Be body aware, pull your head back over your spine, and focus on alignment.