



# MY ACHY BACK



GUEST CORNER

LIZE LUBBE

## CAUSES OF BACK PAIN

The most common cause of back pain is improper use of body mechanics. Other causes include 1) disc bulges or ruptures that can cause nerve impingements and can lead to pain into your legs and feet; 2) sitting for long periods; 3) obesity; and 4) arthritis in the lower back.

Low back pain is usually categorized as acute, subacute, or chronic. Acute pain happens when you overuse your back, experience an injury like falling or being in an accident. Chronic back pain lasts longer than three months and subacute last between six to 12 weeks.

## PREVENTING LOW BACK PAIN

Generally, you can prevent low back pain by bending, lifting, and using your body in a safe and correct way. Correct body mechanics can also prevent disc hernias or ruptures.

### Here are a few suggestions to prevent or minimize low back pain:

- **Sleeping position:** Avoid sleeping on your stomach. When sleeping on your side, use a pillow between your legs and knees. If you are a back sleeper, put a pillow under your knees.
- **Sitting position:** Sit on a chair with good lumbar support and armrests. Place a pillow behind your lower back to maintain support of your lower back curvature. Keep your knees and feet supported and level. Avoid sitting for too long periods: get up and move around every 30 minutes.
- **Standing posture:** Don't slouch. Lift your ribcage up and elongate your spine up to the ceiling. Maintain a neutral pelvic position. Shift your weight from your heels to the ball of your feet or lift one foot up on a higher surface and switch feet.
- **Lifting:** Avoid heavy lifting. If you must lift something heavy, let your legs do the work. Open your knees wide, push your knees over your middle toes, and bend only at the knees, push your buttocks back as if sitting on a chair, and keep your back straight. Hold the load close to your body.
- **Walking:** Keep your ribcage up and away from your stomach, elongate your spine up to the sky. Take long strides and use the inner core muscles to

stabilize your pelvis and lower spine by tightening the belly button to your spine.

- **Driving:** Sit up straight.

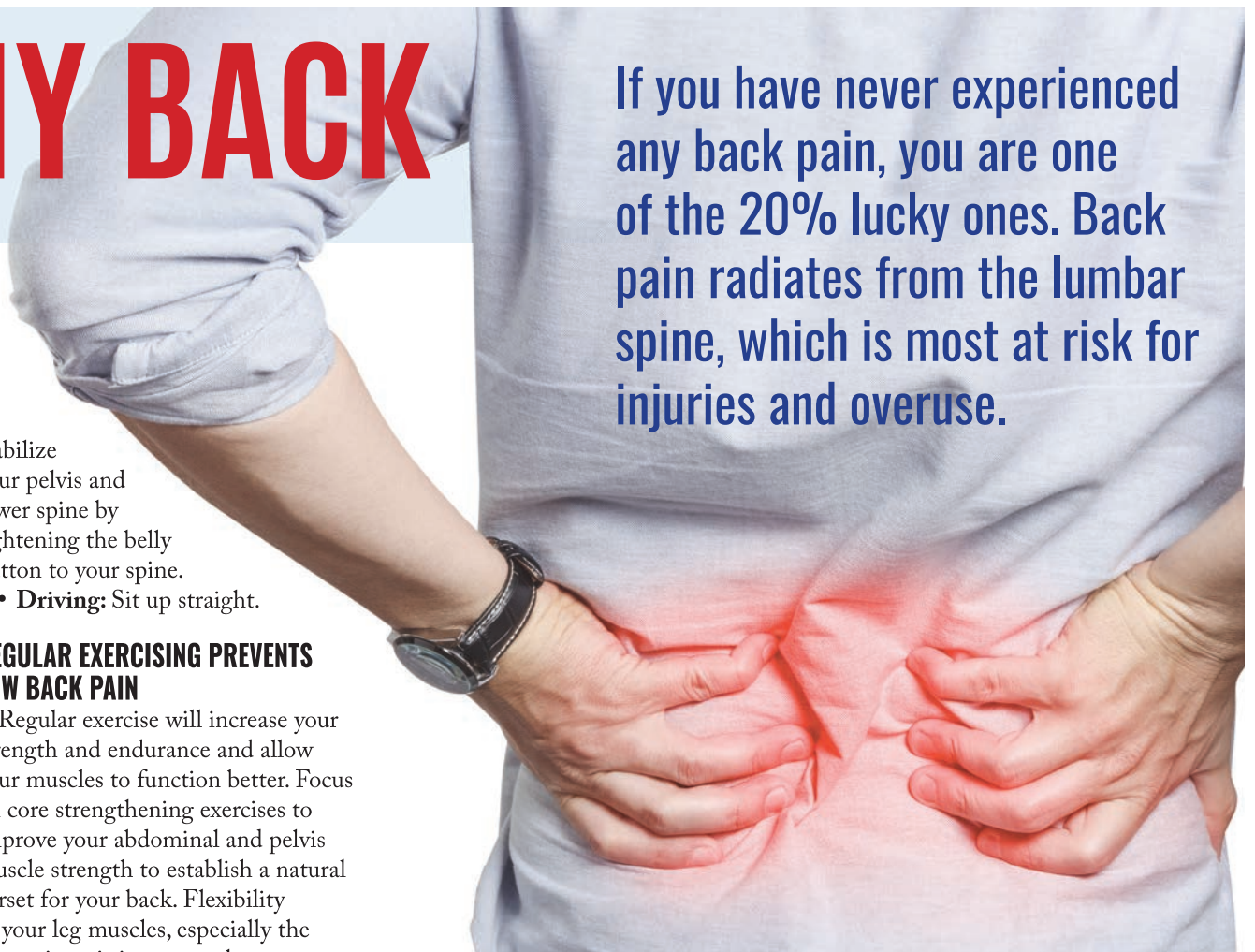
## REGULAR EXERCISING PREVENTS LOW BACK PAIN

Regular exercise will increase your strength and endurance and allow your muscles to function better. Focus on core strengthening exercises to improve your abdominal and pelvic muscle strength to establish a natural corset for your back. Flexibility of your leg muscles, especially the hamstrings, is important because your hamstrings attach onto your sitting bones (Ischium's) and when tight can cause overarched of your lower back. Maintain a healthy weight; being overweight strains your back muscles.

### Here are a few basic core strengthening exercises and hamstring stretches:

- Lie on your back.
  - Bend one knee up to your chest. The other leg is straight and stretched out on the bed or floor. Use your hands to pull your knee up to your chest. Hold 15 seconds. Switch legs. Repeat 10 times.
  - Bend both knees up to your chest and with your hands pull your knees close to your chest. Hold 15 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
  - Bend both knees, feet flat on bed or floor. Tighten your belly button to your spine to flatten out the curve of your lower back. Squeeze your abdominals, pull up your pelvic floor muscles and squeeze your lower buttock muscles tight. Hold for 5 deep diaphragm breaths.
  - Use a strap or towel around your foot to lift one leg straight up towards the ceiling as high as you can and hold the end the strap or towel with your hands. Pull your leg straight up until you feel a pull behind your knee and back of your thigh; hold for 30 seconds. Alternate your legs. Repeat 5 times.
- If you experience more pain or your symptoms become more acute or chronic, please contact your physician or physical therapist for further advice.

If you have never experienced any back pain, you are one of the 20% lucky ones. Back pain radiates from the lumbar spine, which is most at risk for injuries and overuse.



Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing [contact@lizelubbept.com](mailto:contact@lizelubbept.com) or visiting [www.lizelubbept.com](http://www.lizelubbept.com).



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