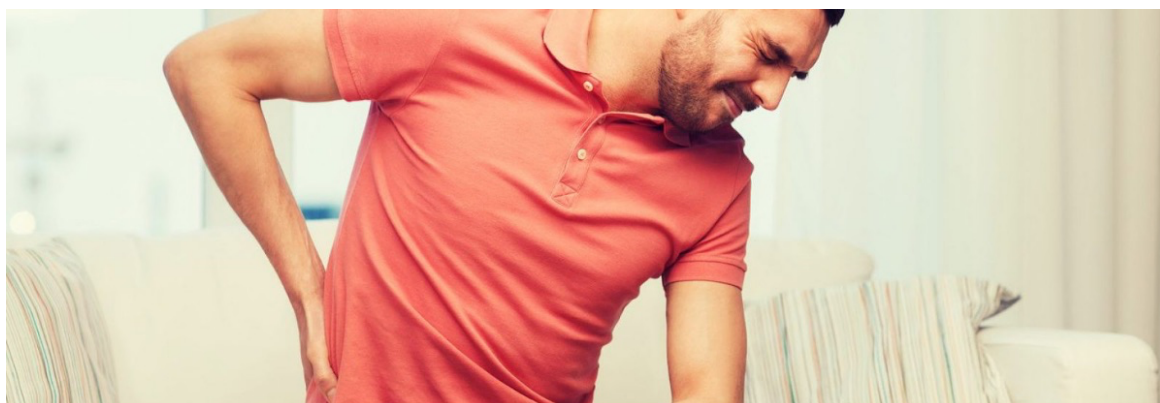


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Media Release – Exercise Your Way to a Healthier Back

From: NZ Register of Exercise Professionals



## Exercise Your Way to a Healthier Back

Back pain. It something that inevitably impacts on all of us at some stage of life, as our backs support us day in and day out. Most often it's a repetitive movement, such as lifting or carrying, or a 'pull' when doing something a little out of the ordinary that leads to backpain.

For those experiencing a back injury or severe ongoing unexplained back pain, following the advice of your healthcare professional and the plan they make is the right pathway to take.

The good news is, for most people experiencing back pain, the symptoms are short term and the pathway back to full and pain free movement is not far away.

As opposed to many other muscle pains, where rest and limited movement is recommended, for the majority of those with back pains, gentle activity will have much better results than bed rest. In fact, the advice for most healthcare professionals is to avoid too much rest and to keep moving.

There's no denying that back pain, whether short term pain or longer-term niggles is an inconvenience, and something that is best prevented rather than managed.

The spine is strong and built for lifting, twisting and moving, all day, every day. However, it does use other muscles to support it in this role. If these muscles are weak or underused, the back is less able to work efficiently and remain pain free.

The trick to preventing back pain is the same as managing it, keeping active.

### Upper Back Pain

Many office or desk-based workers, as well as those involved in repetitive reaching and lifting (such as parents of young children) experience tightness and soreness in the upper back and neck area. This is caused by leaning over a keyboard and being engaged in tasks for an extended period. Symptoms can appear in the back, but also in the hands and arms, making work uncomfortable.

Your first step to minimizing and preventing upper back pain is to make sure your office set up is the right fit for you.

The second step, and one that will not only reduce back pain but improve your mood, lengthen your life and make daily activities easier is to get exercising. An easy start is a regular walk, but including a more planned exercise schedule with back strengthening and postural exercises is important as well.

## Lower Back Pain

Not limited to any particular group, lower back pain is seen across all populations, and is generally more of an inconvenience than a concern. Symptoms appear in the lower back area but can also be felt through the legs and torso. Ongoing lower back pain can be caused by lack of movement, or incorrect movement.

Making sure you don't lean over with your back rounded to pick up loads is a great start, along with keeping up regular movement so your muscles don't get stiff and tight.

Long periods seated and being sedentary increase the risk of back pain, so again exercise is a great way to manage and prevent lower back pain. Often, lower back pain is less about not having a strong back but about having weak core muscles, including abdominals. It is these muscles that support the back and prevent injury.

It's understandable that with any sort of pain, it can be a challenge to get started with an exercise programme. Making sure you get good exercise advice is important and form a registered exercise professional who are qualified and experienced to support you. Off the shelf programmes, or programmes found online are often not the right fit.

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**NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs)** - Independent not for profit quality mark of exercise professionals and facilities. Using REPs Registered Exercise Professionals is the "warrant of fitness check" that exercise professionals and facilities meet New Zealand and internationally benchmarked standards to deliver safe exercise advice and instruction. REPs is affiliated globally to other national exercise professional registers representing over 210,000 exercise professionals through the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (ICREPs) - [www.icreps.org](http://www.icreps.org)

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**Exercise Association of New Zealand** - Not for profit exercise industry representative organisation. Its *mission is to proactively support a sustainable exercise and fitness industry in New Zealand by growing participation in structured exercise through advocacy, information and industry standards.*

