

Q&A

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT BEATING BACK PAIN



Swimming and other water exercises can boost cardiovascular fitness and foster weight loss without stressing the spine and other joints.

SPINE-FRIENDLY WORKOUTS

Q I want to start exercising, but I'm scared that it will make my back pain even worse. What exercises can I do safely to lose weight and take pressure off my spine?

A Cardio workouts are the best for helping burn fat and lose weight. Focus on low-impact exercises like walking, stationary cycling and swimming. Running on hard surfaces may be too jarring for the spine. Exercises that strengthen the core muscles (abdominals, low back muscles) in a static manner such as in yoga or Pilates (as opposed to sit ups and crunches) can also help to stabilize the spine. In general, one should avoid excessive

bending, lifting or twisting to minimize aggravation of the spine.

EXTRA POUNDS AND OA


Q I'm a 40-year-old, 5'3" tall woman and I weigh 180 lbs. I noticed that my osteoarthritis has gotten worse since I've gained weight. Could my weight gain be aggravating my symptoms? How much weight do I need to lose to see an improvement?

A Weight gain can certainly lead to aggravation and worsening of osteoarthritis, especially in the spine. The spine is designed to carry weight in a vertical manner, meaning the body's center of mass should line up over the spine and

pelvis. As weight is accumulated and the center of mass extends beyond the vertical axis, there is an exponential increase in stress on the spine. Try holding a handbag over your shoulder and then in an outstretched hand, and immediately you can feel a difference in back strain. There is no set weight that needs to be lost, as every pound can help reduce the strain on the back.

ALTERNATIVES TO SURGERY

Q My doctor recently suggested doing a spinal surgery. I'm concerned that I won't be able to do my favorite activities like dancing and walking at the park with my friends anymore. What are my other options?

A Spine surgery should be a last resort option for treatment of osteoarthritis in the spine. If you're overweight, shedding excess pounds, whether through diet and exercise or bariatric surgery, is a preferable first option. A full course of physical therapy should also be tried. Finally, pain management injections can often eliminate the need for surgery and should definitely be explored before committing to surgery. 



OUR EXPERT

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