

# How to Fix Your Lower Back



## BODY BY DAN

I'd be willing to bet that over 50% of the people that read this article currently have a lower back problem, and that over 80% have had a lower back problem at one point in their life. So, rest assured – you're not alone. Generally, resting lying on your back with a pillow beneath your knees and at most a very thin pillow beneath your head is the best cure for a sore back. However, there are many different back injuries which don't go away within two weeks, or that keep recurring. For these types of injuries, we need to target and fix the "problem spots." However, before we do that, we need to address postural problems.

Any job where you remain seated for an extended period of time is terrible for your back. Sitting is not the optimal position for the human spine, and this is compounded by the fact that 99.9% of people sit with terrible posture. Imagine the shape of your spine when you are standing with good posture... now imagine the shape of your spine when you are sitting hunched over at your desk and looking at your computer screen. Now, fix the image you have in your head so that you are not hunched over but sitting with perfect posture: shoulders back, chest out, head in line with the body so that you are looking straight ahead, stomach slightly tightened. Basically, imagine yourself as some musclehead on the beach trying to walk around in his "beach-body" pose. With slightly less exaggeration, that is how your upper body should be held when you sit. How many of us actually sit like that for more than a few minutes every day? How many of us sit hunched over for more than a few hours every day? Well, guess what, sitting with poor posture for long hours day in and day out contributes to at least half of your back, shoulder, and neck problems. My point? Do yourself a huge favor and consciously correct your posture all day

long. It would also be helpful to stand up and stretch or walk around every hour or so. Now that we understand the silent contributor to back pain, let's examine the problem spots.



The "problem spots" are the most common contributors to frequent or persistent lower back injuries and are: the hamstrings, glutes (butt), and abs. Tight glutes and hamstrings will result in repeated instances of "your back going out." You should perform at least fifteen minutes of stretching each day following a walk, jog, or other form of warm-up. Five of these minutes should be devoted to the hamstrings, and another five should be devoted to the glutes. Without enough article space to include pictures, the best advice I can give you

for now is to ask a personal trainer for three hamstring stretches, and three glute stretches. Alternatively, I hesitantly admit that looking on the Internet is probably okay as well. Make sure that at least one of the hamstring stretches is unilateral, meaning that you will only be stretching one of your legs for any given set (of course, make sure you do equal sets with each leg). Also, to decompress your spine you should hang from a pull-up bar for about thirty seconds a day and let your back and lower body completely relax. Along with performing these stretches at least five days a week, you should also focus on strengthening your abdominals, glutes, and lower back. Most likely your hamstrings are already strong enough, so don't focus too much time on directly strengthening your hamstrings until your abdominals, glutes, and lower back are brought up to par.

The strengthening exercises should be performed at least three days a week and no more than six days a week. In the next issue of Success Magazine Ltd. I will include picture instructions to performing the following exercises, and a few stretches as well. For now, it may be a good idea to seek out a personal trainer. The recommended exercises are as follows: planks, back press-ups, back extensions, reverse hypers, bird-dog, lying leg abduction, glute bridges, LIGHT Romanian deadlifts, and various yoga forms. As you continue to stretch and strengthen the problem spots you will find that your body will naturally sit and stand with better posture, and as time goes on your back pain should fully diminish.

Be sure to check out next month's article where you will get visual instruction on how to perform these exercises. For now, find a personal trainer, do what you can, and sit with that beach body posture! Good luck!