



Spine Plus'

CORE FOUNDATION
8 WEEK CORE
EXERCISE PROGRAMME
"From Core Zero to Core Hero"

Designed, Prepared and Demonstrated By:

Robert Shanks

**Osteopath, Pilates Instructor, Medical Acupuncturist,
Founder & Director of Spine Plus Clinics**



CONTENTS

DISCLAIMER	Page 3
OVERVIEW	Page 4
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAMME / WELCOME MESSAGE	Page 6
• HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAMME	Page 6
• FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS	Page 8
FOUNDATION – DAILY EXERCISES	Page 17
• NEUTRAL SPINE SETTING	Page 17
• BACK PROTECTED HAMSTRING STRETCHES	Page 18
• CAT & CAMEL SPINAL INTO HOT LIZARD / SUPERMAN	Page 19
• THORACIC MOBILITY – THREADING THE NEEDLE	Page 19
• SUPERMAN – TABLE TOP OR 4 POINT DONKEY KICK VERSION	Page 20
• AIR PLANKS – ONE LEG BALANCING	Page 20
• BROOMSTICK HIP HINGE & HALF SQUAT	Page 21
WEEK 1: DAYS 1 TO 3	Page 23
WEEK 1: DAYS 4 TO 7	Page 24
WEEK 2: DAYS 1 TO 4	Page 25
WEEK 2: DAYS 5 TO 7	Page 26
WEEK 3: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 29
WEEK 4: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 30
WEEK 5: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 31
WEEK 6: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 34
WEEK 7: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 35
WEEK 8: DAYS 1 TO 7	Page 36
INTRODUCTION TO MORE ADVANCED CORE EXERCISES	Page 38
INTRODUCTION TO SELF TRIGGER POINT RELEASE	Page 41
FURTHER SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	Page 48

DISCLAIMER

LIABILITY

The contents of this document should not be taken as medical advice. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any health problem - nor is it intended to replace or be a substitute for one to one advice given by a physician or therapist.

Any form of exercise may cause injury and you assume certain risks to your health and safety. Whilst every effort has been made for it not to be the case, it is possible to become injured or aggravate pre-existing injury by doing exercises in this programme, especially if the exercises are performed with poor technique. If you choose to perform the exercises in this programme you do so of your own free will and at your own risk, knowing and assuming all risks associated with such exercise activities (regardless of prior-injury status).

Always consult your doctor or qualified health professional (e.g. physical therapist) on any matters regarding your health. You should contact them immediately in the event of illness, injury (increased pain or worsening of an injury condition) and follow their direct advice in regard to the continuation of the plan.

TERMAS OF USE

All documents included or exchanged between Spine Plus and the Client are the intellectual property of Spine Plus Ltd and you agree not to copy, sell or redistribute without the expressed permission of Spine Plus Ltd.

OVERVIEW

FOUNDATION / DAILY EXERCISES See Page

FOUNDATION / DAILY EXERCISES ("THE MAGNIFICENT 7")	
1.	Neutral Spine Setting (sitting)
2.	Back Protected Hamstring Stretches
3.	Cat & Camel or Pelvic Tilts
4.	Threading The Needle Level 1
5.	Table Top Superman or 4 Point Superman
6.	One Leg Balance
7.	Broomstick Hip Hinging or Half Squat

CORE EXERCISES PHASE 1

PHASE 1	CORE EXERCISES	
WEEK 1: Days 1 to 3	Transversus Abdominis Contractions	Bent Knee Fall Out – Level 1
	Diaphragm Breathing	One Leg Stretch – Level 1
	Lateral Rib Breathing	Clam Exercise – Level 1a
WEEK 1: Days 4 to 7	Bent Knee Fall Out – Level 1	Swimming Warmup (Legs Only)
	One Leg Stretch – Level 1	Side Lying Leg Raise Level 1
	Clam Exercise – Level 1a or 1b	Side Lying Thoracic Twist
WEEK 2: Days 1 to 4	Bent Knee Fall Out – Level 1	Swimming
	One Leg Stretch – Level 2 or 3	Side Lying Leg Raise Level 2
	Clam Exercise – Level 2	Side Lying Thoracic Twist
WEEK 2: Days 5 to 7	Bent Knee Fall Out – Level 2	Swimming
	One Leg Stretch with Arm Raises Level 1	Side Lying Leg Raise Level 2
	Clam Exercise – Level 2	Multifidus Swelling

CORE EXERCISES PHASE 2

PHASE 2	CORE EXERCISES	
WEEK 3:	Bent Knee Fall Out –Level 2	Superman
	One Leg Stretch with Arm Raises Level 1	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward
	Clam Exercise – Level 3 or 4	Multifidus Swelling
WEEK 4	Anti-Rotation Side Step with Resistance Band	Superman Level 1 or 2
	Dead Bug	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward
	Clam Exercise – Level 3 or 4	Back Bridge
WEEK 5	Anti-Rotation Side Step with Resistance Band	Superman Level 2 (With Band on 2 days)
	Dead Bug	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward
	Clam Exercise – Level 3 or 4	Back Bridge With Resisted Lumbar Rotation

CORE EXERCISES PHASE 3

PHASE 3	CORE EXERCISES	
WEEK 6	Seated Leg Lift	Superman with Band (everyday)
	Modified McGill Curl Up	Side Plank Level 1 (or Side Plank on Physio Ball)
	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward	Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds
WEEK 7	Seated Leg Lift on Physio Ball	Superman with Band or with weights
	Front Plank	Side Plank Level 2 (or Side Plank on Physio Ball)
	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward	Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds or Single Back Bridge
WEEK 8	Seated Leg Lift on Physio Ball	Stiff Leg Deadlifts (using band, bucket or weight).
	Front Plank on Physio Ball	Side Plank Level 2 (or Side Plank on Physio Ball)
	Side Lying Leg Kick Forward	Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds or Single Back Bridge

INTRODUCTION

TO THE PROGRAMME

WELCOME MESSAGE:



HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAMME

This programme is designed to teach and guide you through the most effective way of working and improving the function of your core muscles and spine, whether you are new to exercise or not. Attention to detail and precise technique (rather than going through the motions) is very much the key to gaining the most benefit from this programme. We start with the basics, in weeks 1 and 2 you will be focusing on the correct breathing techniques and being able to switch the correct “background muscles” on, as well as being introduced to the correct stability and movement patterns for the spine. So, even if you are a seasoned fitness fanatic I would urge you to give yourself over to (re-)learning the basics for a couple of weeks. Your job will be

to seek out any kinks in your armour, and any asymmetries where one side of your body holds it's posture better than the other.

The exercises have been put together with functional anatomy and injury prevention very much in mind. If you are recovering from a back problem, then this programme has been designed specifically for you. Improving the function of your core and the dynamic control of movement and stability of your spine should hopefully serve you well. Common sense must prevail however. This is very much an off the shelf programme. It is not a bespoke programme where I have tailor made a rehab routine specifically for you and your particular set of circumstances (including your specific pain generators, past injuries and MRI findings). So if you start to experience any progressive discomfort (apart from using muscles you haven't used for a while) please seek professional one to one advice.

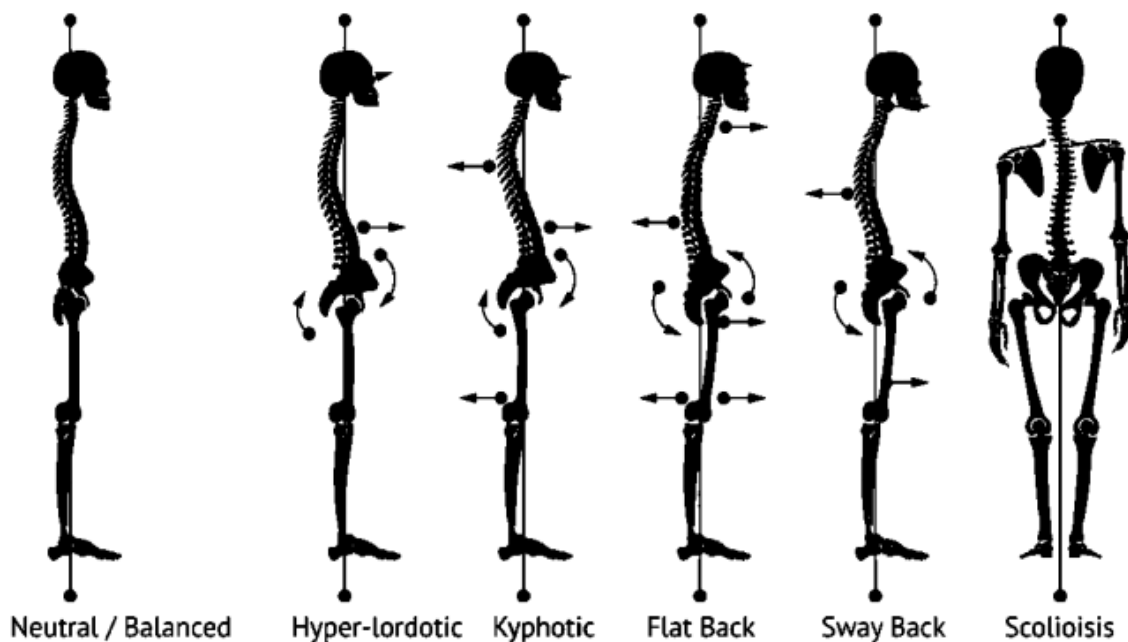
You will be working your core circumferentially, that is to say all the muscles around your torso, the back muscle, side muscles and front muscles, not just your "six pack muscle". A six pack, is neither necessary or even desirable for optimum health and function, or at least certainly not if it is in isolation and at the expense of poor posture and lack of 360 degree muscle control. However, if a six pack is your motive, or even just a somewhat more toned and aesthetic torso, then hopefully the programme will help you achieve your goal whilst simultaneously enhancing the long term health of your spine.

Please take time to read the Fundament Concepts section.

FUNDAMENTAL

CONCEPTS

WHICH POSTURE ARE YOU?



Most of us will not have and may not ever fully achieve the perfectly aligned and balanced posture of the first skeleton in the picture above, especially if we have spent years (or decades) hunched over a school or office desk. It is also the case that many people, when you examine them closely enough, will have a slight twist of asymmetry through their spine and skeletal system and it is important not to become overly paranoid that this will inevitably lead to pain, degeneration or problems in years ahead.

With that said, increased postural awareness and the likely improvements in posture that this will lead to can only be a good thing. This will be expected to pay dividends not just with the amount of benefit you will get out of this programme but also with the long term health and performance of your spine and body as a whole.

Notice how much more of a curve in the lower back there is in the "Hyper-lordotic"

and "Kyphotic" postures above, compared to the first "Neutral" posture. This increased curve is likely to place increased mechanical strain on the small facet joints in the lower back which, over time, could lead to degenerative and painful (arthritic) changes in these joints.

Facet Joint Pain



Want to understand more about Facet Joint Pain and what can be done? See my You Tube Video Playlist: [Click Here](#)

Secondly, notice how the lumbar (low back) curve in the "Sway Back" posture is more or less absent, in fact it almost has a reverse curve ie. a flexed or convex lower spine as opposed to the subtle concavity (lordosis) of the Neutral posture. This loss of lordosis has been linked to increased mechanical strain on the lumbar discs that can lead to disc herniations, trapped nerves and sciatica.

It is important to know therefore which direction you need to sail in (i.e. which adjustments to your posture you ideally need to make). As much as you can, when performing the exercises presented in this programme aim to do the exercises with a neutral / balanced posture as shown in the first diagram. The main elements to aim for are:

- A shallow curve inwards (lordosis) in your lower back (lumbar spine)
- From a side view - ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles aligned vertically forming a "plumb line."
- From a front view – both ears, both shoulders and both hips level.

There will be exceptions to these guidelines. For example, if you already have degenerative discs or facet joints in your lower back, your body may not allow you and it may not be desirable to aim for a "neutral" curve since enlarged and degenerative facet joints may already be over compressed with a neutral curve. In such circumstances your particular neutral may be a straight rather than slightly curved lower back. In such circumstance you should be going through this programme with your physical therapist ideally with logical analysis and adjustments from having had up to date imaging (such as an MRI scan).

However, in the absence of these types of chronic (long term) pain conditions and as general rule you should be fine to follow the advice of aiming for neutral spinal curves and posture (first picture).

MOBILITY VS STABILITY

You may of have heard the term "Core" or Core Stability but what actually is "the core", what is "core stability" and why is it important?



Is it the core your six pack muscle (Rectus Abdominis) famed by fitness models the world over? Is it your spine? Is it your rib cage? Your core is actually none of these things in isolation but all of them, and more, together. Many people think of their spine as being their "back bone" or in other words their back. However, the truth is that your spinal column, the bit of your spine that makes up the vertebrae, discs, spinal cord and nerves, is actually located much nearer the centre of your body. Your spinal column is surrounded and encased by a sophisticated system of bones, ligaments, muscles

and other soft tissues (fascia) capable of providing movement and also stability. This includes the six pack muscle, the oblique muscle at the side of your waist and perhaps most important of all, your "Transversus Abdominis" muscle (show above) that lies beneath all of these and wraps right around your trunk.

Having spent years working at the "coal face", treating 1000's of patients, looking at numerous MRI scans and shadowing the radiologists from the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, in Stanmore (London), there are a few things I've come to realise (some less obvious than others).

- Firstly, whilst it is by no means a predictor of pain (there are plenty of people and studies showing worn discs in people with no pain), the fact remains that degenerative disc disease is one, if not the main cause of chronic low back pain and sciatica.
- Secondly, it is well documented that lack of stability between the segments of the spine (vertebra) is a causal factor of degenerative intervertebral discs. The flip side of this is that segments that have the least amount of movement in them will exhibit the most preserved (healthy) discs on MRI scans. In my opinion, this particularly point is grossly under appreciated and under publicised amongst the medical, physical therapy and general community. The most obvious example of this is Bertolotti Syndrome which involves extra bony or fibrous attachments between the last two segments of the spine, thereby causing reduced or no movement either side of that particular disc space. One always sees a (virtually) pristine disc at that segment, usually at the expense of the disc space(s) above which have to compensate with extra movement and usually show signs of premature wear and tear.
- Furthermore, people who have suffered with, even just one episode of back pain, will often suffer from "reciprocal inhibition" to their deep

spinal muscles and muscles making up their core. Even when they have initially recovered from an episode of back pain, this switching off of the timing, coordination and strength of these muscles can unfortunately leave them vulnerable to future episodes of pain.

Does this mean that you should aim never to move the segments of your spine? Or does it mean that manipulative therapies, the ones' whose treatment technique "adjust" or "click" to realign or create movement, have no place? This is certainly not the case in my opinion.

Movement, including that of your spine, is part of life, whether it be painting the bottom of a fence or looking over your shoulder to reverse your car. Your spine needs a certain amount of movement to promote circulation (blood flow) to it's discs and facet joints. As a manipulative therapist myself, I have seen first hand how the right manipulation at the right time can make a huge and often instant difference to someone in pain. However, you can certainly have too much of a good thing. There are times when your spine needs to be rigid, for example when lifting heavy objects (*which by the way includes heavy shopping bags*), striking a ball or throwing a punch. A reliance on stretching exercises, an obsession with achieving a super flexible spine and repeated (and unnecessary) manipulative treatments, in the absence of other strategies will likely only increase segmental (micro)instability and therefore will not be of benefit in the long term, especially to those already suffering with back problems. The goal should be to achieve symmetry of movement throughout of spine (with each segment doing their fair share of movement) and an overall balance between flexibility and stability.

A MESSAGE FOR BACK PAIN OR SCIATICA SUFFERERS.

Your motivation for following this programme may be for it to be part of your recovery from a back problem. Before going any further, let me emphasise that this should be PART of, not the sole component of your back pain management plan. This programme will be no substitute for one to one in clinic analysis and intervention from an experienced and competent back pain specialist / therapist. With that said,

the programme has been designed with back pain sufferers in mind, particular those with disc problems, looking for a structured exercise plan to help regain their postural and core muscle control.

I have intentionally eliminated many movements such as “roll downs”, “crunches” or “Russian twists” that tend to encourage repeated or static flexion of the lumbar spine, and which have the capacity to aggravate issues such as disc tears, bulges and herniations. Hopefully all the exercises should be tolerable even if you have a long term back problem, particularly if you follow the progressive order of the exercises from week 1 to week 8. I have designed the programme to incorporate and provide stability in all the planes of motion (not just the front plane that is a feature of standard abdominal exercises such as sit-ups, crunches and front planks).

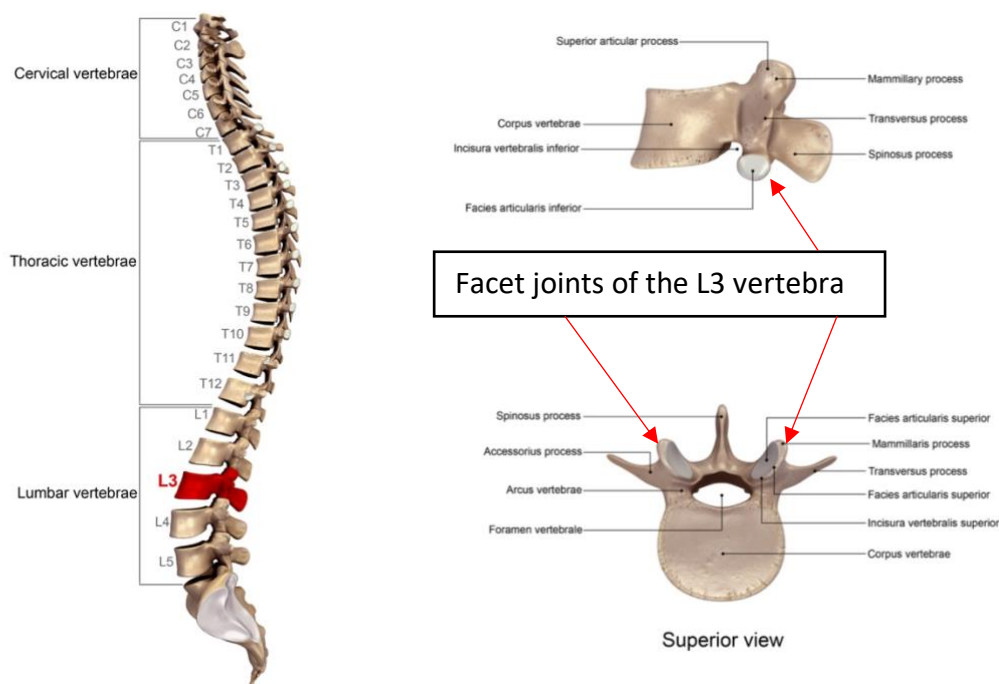
Throughout the programme you will be working with more and more intensity, your deep abdominal muscles, your obliques, Rectus (six pack) and deep spinal muscles. You will be doing so with resisted flexion, rotation, side bending and extension movements. You will discover that apart from a few articulation exercises (such as Cat & Camel, Threading the Needle and Sidelying Thoracic Twists), most of the exercises require you to focus on maintaining a motionless spine and torso, whilst making various movements of your arms and legs. This is completely intentional and in keeping with modern concepts about the ideal way the muscles around your trunk should be working as discovered by recognised experts in this field such as Professor Stuart McGill. The idea is to train your core muscles to dampen or restrict movements of your spine, thereby stabilising it, in order to allow damaged discs and joints in the spine to heal and to prevent them from becoming damaged in the first place.

Common sense is still needed however. Aside from the transient feeling of having worked muscles you have not worked for a while (which could last a few days initially), if you do find any of the exercises cause significant discomfort, pain, or aggravation of any pre-existing symptoms, either during the exercise, or afterwards, you should eliminate those particular exercises (consider revisiting them at a later date when things have settled, or in severe cases, stop the programme completely and seek professional one to one advice).

IF YOU JUST WANT A FLATTER, MORE TONED MID-SECTION

It may be the case that you do not have any back issues at all and your motive for getting this programme may be because you want a flatter, more toned mid section, and / or it may to help you achieve improved sporting performance. These are both perfectly acceptable motives. What this programme will give you is a build up to and an introduction to effective core workouts that at the same time help promote the health and stability of your spine. For me, when it comes to incorporating ab / core exercises into any gym routine, swapping out potentially risky exercises such as crunches and Russian Twists for the exercises presented in this programme just seems like a logical choice. If you are confident that your core muscles are in reasonable shape, you may wish to fast track to the Advanced Core Exercises.

DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SPINE MOVE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.



As you will see from the diagram above the human spine is divided into three main sections: the cervical region (neck), thoracic and lumbar. If we look at the orientation of facet joints in these different regions we notice that their orientation is different in

the different regions. Most of the vertebrae in the lumbar region have a facet joints in the sagittal plane, that is to say the surface of the joints on left and right face each other. This dictates that the primary motion in the lumbar spine is forward and backward bending (flexion and extension).

By contrast, the vertebra in the thoracic spine have their facet joints orientated in a much more coronal direction, meaning the surface of the joints face front to back. This means the thoracic region is designed mostly for rotation (and side bending) movements.

Problems, such as strain on the intervertebral discs, may occur in the lumbar spine (lower back) when its vertebra are "required" to perform rotation movements they are not ideally suited to. Such requirement may come from poorly designed back exercise routines that include lumbar or pelvic rotation movements where the hips / pelvis move on a shoulders that are fixed to the ground. Or the requirement may be a compensatory requirement due to lack of rotatory motion in a very stiff thoracic spine.

This is why I have intentionally omitted any pelvic rotation exercises but included daily thoracic rotation mobilisation from the "Threading the Needle" exercise.

FOUNDATION

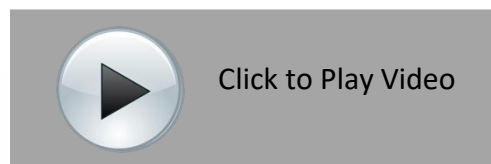
Daily Exercises

FOUNDATION

Daily Exercises

I recommend performing these 7 exercises every day. This is in addition to your set routine specific for that week. These 7 exercises don't all have to be done in a row. You can do all 7 in a row and they are set out in this order to flow nicely one to the next. However, it's equally acceptable to perform the first 4 exercises say in the morning, then incorporate exercises 5, 6 and 7 into your daily routine. As they are performed from a standing position exercises 5, 6 and 7 can be performed up to a few times a day. For example, if you about to sweep the kitchen floor, prior to doing so, perform a quick circuit of Standing Superman, Air Plank (with one leg balance) and Broomstick Hip Hinges. Before beginning weeks 1 – 8 of the main programme you may like to spend a week or two just going through the foundation exercises, particularly if you are new to the concepts and exercises presented here.

Exercise 1. Setting a Neutral Spine & Setting the Core.



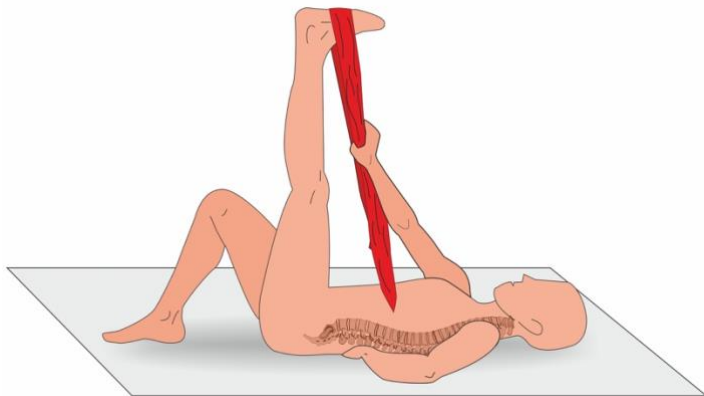
Start by lying on your back with your knees bent as shown. You can rest your head on a pillow or folded towel if you wish. Try to keep your rib cage relaxed and in contact with the floor. Keep your shoulders down (away from your ears) and relaxed back in the floor. Place your hand underneath your lower back, notice if and how much of a curve you have in your lower back. Keeping your shoulders and ribs cage as still as possible start tilting your pelvis one way then another, feel how the curve (gap between your spine and floor) in your lower back changes as your tilt. There are 5 segments (disc spaces) in your lower back, try to visualise each of them moving (flexing and extending) proportionally. Start with larger movements (tilts) then make them smaller and smaller until you come to rest with between 1 and 2 finger widths between your spine in middle of your lower back, and the floor. This should approximate to what is known as a “neutral lumbar (lower back) curve”, meaning it has just the right amount of curve (concavity) to minimise strain on the spinal discs, joints, muscles and ligaments.

Having set a neutral curve you are now going to “set” your main core muscle. This muscle is called the Transversus Abdominis, it is the deepest layer of muscle in your abdomen (or core), it sits beneath the “six pack” or “abs” muscles (Rectus Abdominis). It wraps circumferentially around your trunk exerting its influence from front to back, providing stability to the lumbar segments of the spine. Place your finger tips placed just inside the bony prominences at the top and front of your pelvis (ASIS). Slowly breath in and out as normal. At the end of an outbreath, slowly pull your belly button inwards in order to feel a slight contraction under your fingers (aim for 25% of maximal effort).

Feel the contraction on the left and the right sides, trying to make the timing and amount of contraction simultaneous and equal. Hold for at least 1 second, aim for 10 or more repetitions building up to holds of up to 10 seconds. Once you have pulled your belly button in and “set” (contracted) your Transversus muscle, you should be aiming to breath normally as you maintain that contraction.

This truly is a foundation exercise. With all the exercises that follow this sequence of setting and holding a neutral spine and Transversus exercise should form the basis and starting point of each exercise.

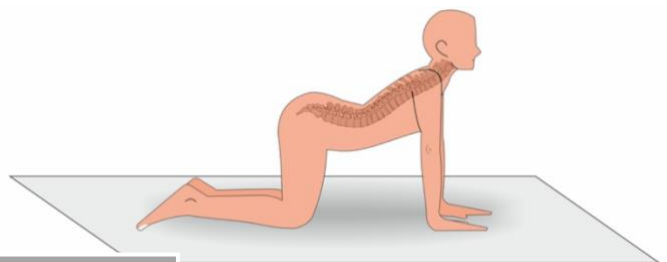
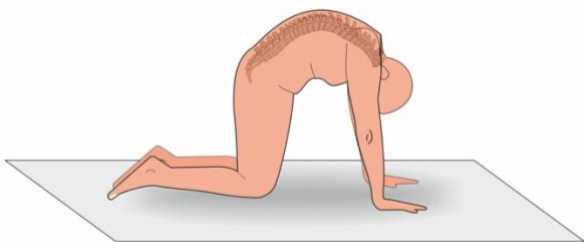
Exercise 2. Back Protected Hamstring Stretches



Click to Play Video

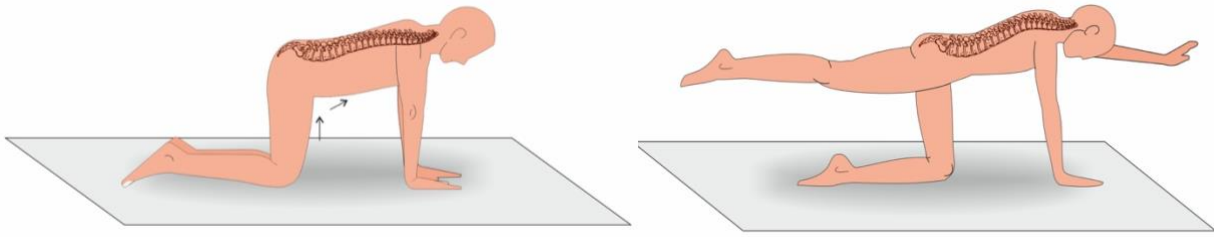
Lie on your back using your hand to help set a neutral curve in your lower back. Using a band or belt around your foot, stretch your leg upwards towards the ceiling, keep your knee as straight as possible. As soon as you feel your lumbar spine flattening, stop lifting your leg up as you will be at maximum stretch in your hamstring muscle at the back of your thigh. Hold the stretch for at least 30 seconds, then repeat on the other leg.

Exercise 3. Cat & Camel into Hot Lizard or Superman.



Click to Play Video





Kneel on all fours, slowly arch your spine upwards making a C shape as you simultaneously tuck your tail bone in (posteriorly rotating your pelvis) and drop your head forwards (first picture).

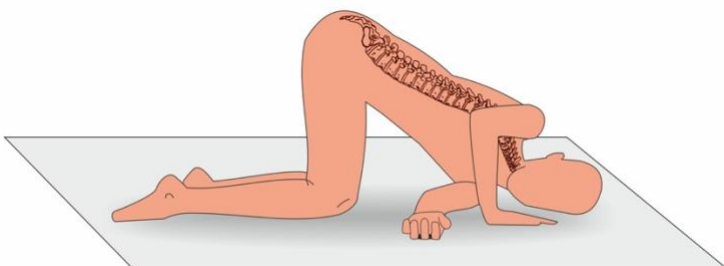
Try to feel each segment of your spine moving. Hold this position for 5 - 10 seconds.

Then slowly arch your spine and pelvis the other way as you lift your head up, stop when your lower back is just past the neutral position i.e. a slightly accentuated arch in the lower back. Do not over arch one way or the other, i.e. do not go to full range. The idea of this exercise is for it to be an articulation (get all the parts of the spine moving) rather than a stretch to full range. Repeat this movement into a “flexed” and “extended” spine 6 or 7 times, stopping the movement short if anything feels like it is pinching or becoming painful in your spine.

Next, perform the “Hot Lizard” exercise by coming to a static position so that your spine is in a neutral position (*as shown in the first picture above*). Engage your core (Transversus muscle) by pulling your tummy in (and up) for 25% effort. Hold this position, then start by raising just one arm off the floor slightly. Hold for a second then place your hand back down and repeat for the other arm. Next, do the same for the legs, slowly raise one leg slightly, hold, place back down and repeat for the other leg. Repeat this sequence of raising each arm and leg (on it's own) several times.

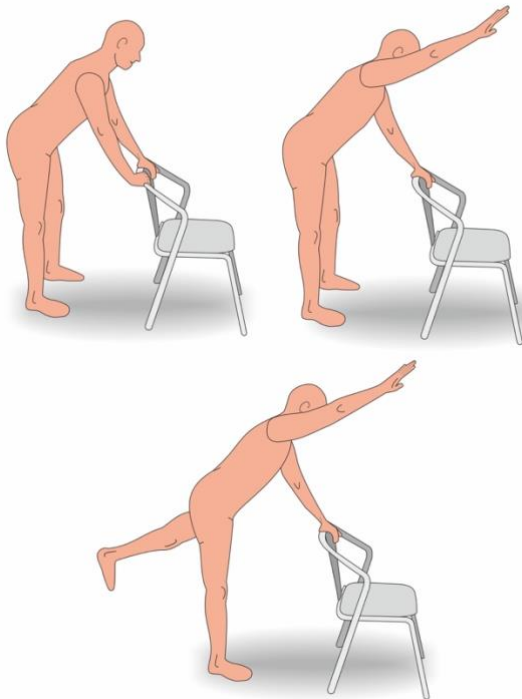
If you feel able progress into the “Superman” pose by raising one arm and the opposite leg TOGETHER (*as shown in the last illustration*). Hold this position for 1 to 5 seconds, repeating several times for each leg / arm combination.

Exercise 4. Threading the Needle (Level 1)



From the all fours position of Exercise 3, pass one hand through the gap between your hand and knee on the opposite side. Keep your core engaged (tummy pulled in by around 25% of maximum effort) with a neutral lumbar (lower back) curve aiming to create the movement just by twisting through your middle back (thoracic spine)

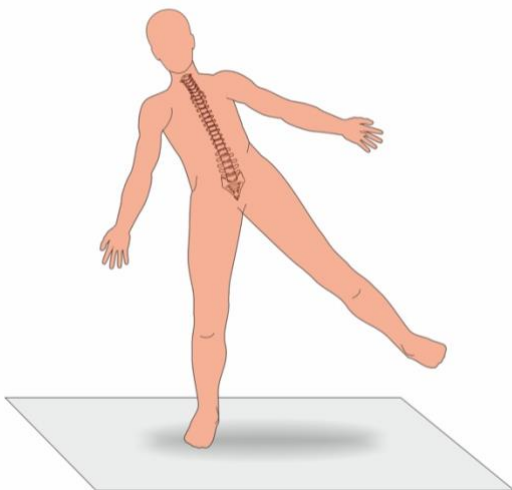
Exercise 5. Standing Superman



[Click to Play Video](#)

From a standing position, take a moment to think about and if necessary readjust your posture. Chest up, shoulders back and down, head retracted and a slight arch in your lower back (lumbar spine) as you helped “set” in Exercise 1. If you can, feel for a contraction in your Transversus muscle, as you did in Exercise 1, aiming for around a 25% effort contraction with you maintain through this (and all other exercises) so that your core is “engaged”. Next, lean slightly forward ensuring you pivot through your hips so that you do not lose the neutral spinal posture / curves you have just set. Then raise one arm, going as far as is comfortable. Hold this position, if possible raise your opposite leg off the ground behind you, trying to squeeze and contract with the glute / buttock muscle. If necessary, lightly hold on to a chair, table or work surface to maintain balance. Hold for a second or two, then repeat 5 to 10 times, then repeat for the arm / leg combination on the other side.

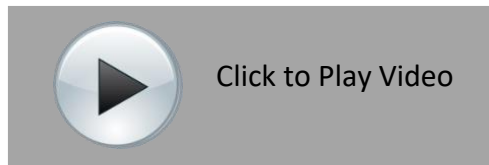
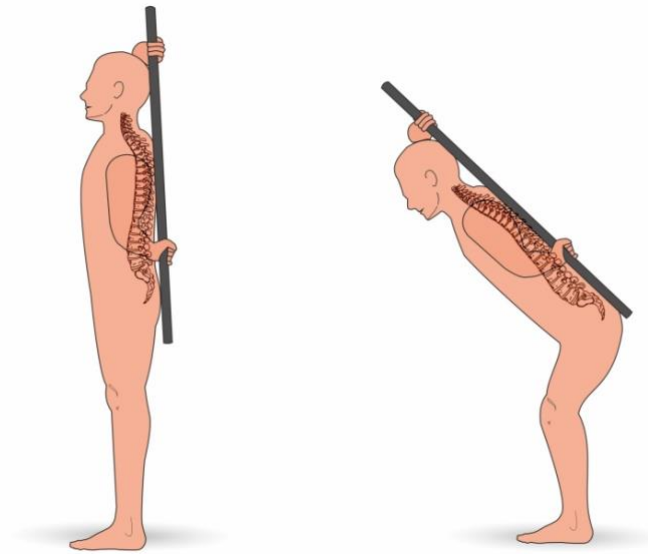
Exercise 6. Air Planks (with One Leg Balance).



[Click to Play Video](#)

Whilst maintaining neutral spine curves, stand on one leg. Initially stay upright, keep your spine near vertical. Then tilt your upper body sideways, pivoting on one leg, try not to bend your spine sideways, keep it more or less straight, as shown in the illustration. Then return to a vertical position. Hold this one leg vertical position once more for a second or two, then repeat another sideways tilt, trying to stay on the one leg throughout (harder than it sounds). Repeat this whole process a few times, then swap legs and tilt sideways to opposite side.

Exercise 7. Broomstick Hip Hinge Or Mini Squat



Take a broom stick or equivalent pole, place it along your back with three points of contact: “Butt-Back-Back of Head”. The best way of achieving this is to start by placing the pole just above your “butt crack” (so it rests on your sacrum). Then using hand and finger tips as illustrated you can hold the pole whilst feeling for a gap in your lower back. Tilt your pelvis forward and back so that you create just the right amount of gap between your lower spine and pole (around 1 to 3 finger widths). Next, whilst maintaining this “neutral” lumbar curve, lift your breast bone (sternum), upwards, trying to get the back of your head to contact the pole, without tilting your neck back too much. Don’t worry if you can’t quite get your head back to contact the pole, just aim for this position as much as you are able. As time goes on, over the weeks and months this position should become easier to achieve. Finally, engage your core by pulling your belly in slightly.

Maintain this fixed position as you pivot or hinge through your hips with slightly bent knees. Then stand up straight again. Repeat this hip hinging movement several times. Pay careful attention to whether or not lumbar spine flattens, or over arches as your hinge forward at the hip. Similarly, be mindful of whether your head pulls away from the pole as your hinge forward. If you find this happening, try to eliminate these disadvantageous movements on each subsequent repetition so that you aim to maintain “spinal stability”.

CORE EXERCISES

PHASE 1

Weeks 1 & 2



Perform 1 set of each exercise, once a day.

Transversus Abdominis Contractions

Place your finger tips just the bony prominences at the top and front of your pelvis (ASIS), pull your belly button inwards in order to feel a slight contraction under your fingers (25% of maximal effort). Hold for at least 1 second, aim for 10 or more reps.



Diaphragm Breathing (10 breaths)

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. With one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen, take slow breaths in and out using only your diaphragm so that the hand on your abdomen hand rises and falls with no movement from your chest.



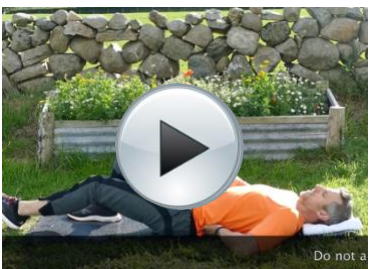
Lateral Rib Breathing (10 breaths)

Lie on your back with a strap place around your lower rib cage (or hands placed over the lower ribs). Whilst keeping your spine fixed with neutral curves, breath in and out feeling the lower ribs flare outwards as you breath in and inwards as your breathe out.



Bent Knee Fall Out (Hip Twist) Level 1

Lie on you back with knees bent and neutral spinal curves. Slowly drop one knee 45 degrees out to the side whilst trying to keep the other knee perfectly still and pelvis level. Keep your belly button pulled in very slightly whilst breathing normally. 10 reps each leg.



One Leg Stretch Level 1

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. Starting with both knees bent, straighten one leg at a time, keeping the heel in contact with the ground and maintaining a fixed neutral arch in your lower back. Aim for 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg.



Clam Exercises Level 1a

Lie on your side with both knees bent. Whilst trying to maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your feet in contact with each other. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.

Perform 1 set of each exercise, once a day



Bent Knee Fall Out (Hip Twist) Level 1

Lie on your back with knees bent and neutral spinal curves. Slowly drop one knee 45 degrees out to the side whilst trying to keep the other knee perfectly still and pelvis level. Keep your belly button pulled in very slightly whilst breathing normally. 15 reps each leg.



One Leg Stretch Level 1

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. Starting with both knees bent, straighten one leg at a time, keeping the heel in contact with the ground and maintaining a fixed neutral arch in your lower back. Aim for 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg.



Clam Exercises Level 1a or 1b

Lie on your side with both knees bent (place a band around your knees for version 1b). Whilst trying to maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your feet in contact with each other. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



Swimming Warmup (Legs Only)

Lie on your front with finger tips just inside the bony prominences at the top and front of your pelvis (ASIS). Whilst trying to maintain a slight Transversus contraction and a level pelvis raise one leg at a time (trying to use your glute muscles). 10 reps each leg.



Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 1

Lie on your side with legs almost straight. Whilst trying to maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top leg out to the side. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



Side-Lying Thoracic Twist

Lie on your side with knees bent, spine straight, neutral arches and slight pull in your belly button. Starting with arms out in front of you, slowly twist your torso from above the belly button (so you rotate your thoracic spine and not the lower back). 10 to 20 reps.



Perform 1 or 2 sets of each exercise, once or twice a day.

Bent Knee Fall Out (Hip Twist) Level 1

Lie on your back with knees bent and neutral spinal curves. Slowly drop one knee 45 degrees out to the side whilst trying to keep the other knee perfectly still and pelvis level. Keep your belly button pulled in very slightly whilst breathing normally. 15 reps each leg.



One Leg Stretch Level 1

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. Starting with both knees bent, straighten one leg at a time, keeping the heel in contact with the ground and maintaining a fixed neutral arch in your lower back. Aim for 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg.



Clam Exercises Level 2

Lie on your side with bottom leg almost straight (place band around your knees for increased resistance). Maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your foot in contact with the bottom leg. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



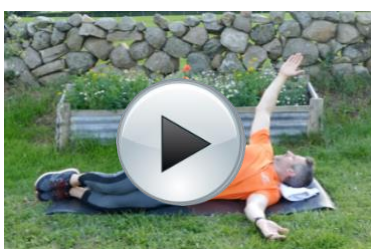
Swimming

Start with a few reps of "Swimming Warmup". Then raise your arms overhead, whilst trying to maintain a slight Transversus contraction, a level pelvis and neutral spinal curves, raise one leg and the opposite arm. Alternate sides with rep, 10 -20 reps each side.



Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 2

Lie on your side with legs almost straight. Then for level 2, raise the lower leg slightly, so the ankle is off the floor. Whilst trying to maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top leg out to the side. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



Side-Lying Thoracic Twist

Lie on your side with knees bent, spine straight, neutral arches and slight pull in your belly button. Starting with arms out in front of you, slowly twist your torso from above the belly button (so you rotate your thoracic spine and not the lower back). 10 to 20 reps.

Perform 1 or 2 sets of each exercise, once or twice a day.



Bent Knee Fall Out (Hip Twist) Level 2

Lie on your back with knees bent and neutral spinal curves. Raise one foot off the floor, then slowly drop your knee 45 degrees out to the side, keep the other knee perfectly still, pelvis level and tummy pulled in slightly (Transversus contraction). 15 reps each leg.



One Leg Stretch & Arm Raise Level 1

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. Starting with both knees bent, straighten one leg at a time, keeping the heel in contact with the ground and maintaining a fixed neutral arch in your lower back. Aim for 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg.



Clam Exercises Level 2

Lie on your side with bottom leg almost straight (place band around your knees for increased resistance). Maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your foot in contact with the bottom leg. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



Swimming

Start with a few reps of "Swimming Warmup". Then raise your arms overhead, whilst trying to maintain a slight Transversus contraction, a level pelvis and neutral spinal curves, raise one leg and the opposite arm. Alternate sides with rep, 10 -20 reps each side.



Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 2

Lie on your side with legs almost straight. Then for level 2, raise the lower leg slightly, so the ankle is off the floor. Whilst trying to maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top leg out to the side. Aim for 10 reps with each leg.



Multifidus Swelling

With thumbs feeling the muscles either side of your spine, lean slightly forward, feel the muscles contract. Resume a perfectly upright posture so the muscles relax. Then, without leaning, try to perform a 5 second (isometric) contraction of the muscles, then relax. Repeat at different levels of your low back trying to ensure the duration and amount of contraction is equal on the left and right.

PROGRESS CHECK

Have you been able to complete ALL the exercises in Phase 1 with good control, posture and without any (increase) pain?

YES

Move on the Phase 2.

I've not experienced any pain but I can't maintain good posture or hold a neutral spine on all the exercises.

Repeat phase 1 or the exercises of your choosing from Phase 1, trying to master the exercises you find difficult.

I've experienced some (increased) pain.

Try to repeat Phase 1 but eliminate any exercises you think are responsible for your discomfort.

Also speak to your physical therapist or arrange an online / video consultation with one of the Team

CORE EXERCISES

PHASE 2

Weeks 3, 4, 5.

Aim for 2 sets of each exercise, once or twice a day.



Bent Knee Fall Out (Hip Twist) Level 2

Lie on your back with knees bent and neutral spinal curves. Raise one foot off the floor, then slowly drop your knee 45 degrees out to the side, keep the other knee perfectly still, pelvis level and tummy pulled in slightly (Transversus contraction). 15 reps each leg.



One Leg Stretch & Arm Raise Level 1

Lie on your back with neutral spinal curves. Starting with both knees bent, straighten one leg at a time, keeping the heel in contact with the ground and maintaining a fixed neutral arch in your lower back. Aim for 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg.



Clam Exercises Level 3 or 4

Lie on your side with bottom leg almost straight and arm overhead. Maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your foot in contact with the bottom leg (level 3) or with the top fixed hovering above the top leg (level 4). 10 reps



Superman Level 1

Start by kneeling on all fours, spend a moment to set a neutral spinal posture. With your tummy pulled in slightly slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg, hold for the count of one or two seconds, lower and repeat for 10 to 20 reps for each leg / arm combo.



Side-Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the other side.



Multifidus Swelling With thumbs feeling the muscles either side of your spine, lean slightly forward, feel the muscles contract. Resume a perfectly upright posture so the muscles relax. Then, without leaning, try to perform a 5 second (isometric) contraction of the muscles, then relax. Repeat at different levels of your low back trying to ensure the duration and amount of contraction is equal on the left and right.

Aim for at least 2 sets of each exercise, once a day.



Anti-Rotation Side Step

Standing posture (head and shoulders retracted, neutral spinal curves). Using a resistance band held in front of you at arms length, take steps sideways whilst resisting the band without allowing it to twist your torso. 10 – 20 reps then repeat on the other side.



Dead Bug

Start by lying on your back, with a neutral curve in your lower back, knees and hips bent up at 90 degrees and arms just past vertical. Lower one arm and the opposite leg without allowing any twist in your torso or arching of your lower back. 10 to 20 reps each side.



Clam Exercises Level 3 or 4

Lie on your side with bottom leg almost straight and arm overhead. Maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your foot in contact with the bottom leg (level 3) or with the top fixed hovering above the top leg (level 4). 10 reps



Superman Level 1 or 2

Start by kneeling on all fours, spend a moment to set a neutral spinal posture. With your tummy pulled in slightly slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg, hold momentarily (level 1) or draw circles (level 2), repeat for 10 to 20 reps for each leg / arm combo.



Side-Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the other side.



Back Bridge

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Set and maintain a neutral spine and a slight Transversus contraction (feel with your hand if needed). Push your hips upwards until your thighs & torso are in line. Hold momentarily, lower & repeat 10 - 20 times.

Aim for at least 2 sets of each exercise, 1 to 2 times a day.



Anti-Rotation Side Step

Standing posture (head and shoulders retracted, neutral spinal curves). Using a resistance band held in front of you at arms length, take steps sideways whilst resisting the band without allowing it to twist your torso. 10 – 20 reps then repeat on the other side.



Dead Bug

Start by lying on your back, with a neutral curve in your lower back, knees and hips bent up at 90 degrees and arms just past vertical. Lower one arm and the opposite leg without allowing any twist in your torso or arching of your lower back. 10 to 20 reps each side.



Clam Exercises Level 3 or 4

Lie on your side with bottom leg almost straight and arm overhead. Maintain a straight spine with neutral curves, slowly raise your top knee whilst keeping your foot in contact with the bottom leg (level 3) or with the top fixed hovering above the top leg (level 4). 10 reps



Superman Level 2 (with band on two days)

Start by kneeling on all fours, spend a moment to set a neutral spinal posture. With your tummy pulled in slightly, slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg, hold the position whilst drawing circles with you arms / legs. Repeat for 10 to 20 reps for each side.



Side-Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the other side.



Back Bridge with Resisted Lumbar Rotation

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Keeping a neutral spine, push your hips upwards until your thighs & torso are level. Hold this position momentarily whilst resisting a twisting force on your pelvis, using your arms,, lower & repeat 10 - 20 times.

PROGRESS CHECK

Have you been able to complete ALL the exercises in Phase 1 with good control, posture and without any (increase) pain?

YES

Move on the Phase 3.

I've not experienced any pain but I can't maintain good posture or hold a neutral spine on all the exercises.

Repeat phase 1 or the exercises of your choosing from Phase 1, trying to master the exercises you find difficult.

I've experienced some (increased) pain.

Try to repeat Phase 1 but eliminate any exercise you think are responsible for your discomfort.

Also speak to your physical therapist or arrange an online / video consultation with one of the Team

CORE EXERCISES

PHASE 3

Weeks 6, 7, 8.

Aim for 3 sets of each exercise, once a day.



Seated Leg Lift

Sit upright with good posture and no slouching, slightly pull in your tummy in (feel the contraction of your Transversus Abdominis just inside your hip bones). Slowly lift one knee up a time without changing your lower back posture or tilting your pelvis. 10 reps.



Modified Mc Gill Curl Up

Lie on your back with one knee bent and foot on the floor, the other leg straight and the opposite arm overhead. Place your other hand under your low back to provide feedback for maintaining a neutral spine. Lift your shoulders off the floor just slightly, then pulse your arm and leg upwards whilst using your core to maintain a neutral spine.



Side-Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the other side.



Superman Level 2 (with band on two days)

Start by kneeling on all fours, spend a moment to set a neutral spinal posture. With your tummy pulled in slightly, slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg, hold the position whilst drawing circles with you arms / legs. Repeat for 10 to 20 reps for each side.



Side Plank Level 1 (or on Physio Ball)

Lie on your side with knees bent, resting on one elbow. Raise your hips up off the floor so that your thighs are parallel with your torso. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. If you have shoulder problems perform on a Physio Ball or **Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 2**.



Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Keeping a neutral spine, push your hips upwards until your thighs & torso are level. Then lift one foot off the ground, hold momentarily lower & repeat 5 - 15 times for each leg.

Aim for 3 sets of each exercise, 1 to 2 times a day.



Seated Leg Lift on Physio Ball

Sit upright with good posture and no slouching, slight pull your tummy in (feel the contraction of your Transversus Abdominis just inside your hip bones). Slowly lift one knee up at a time without changing your lower back posture or tilting your pelvis. 10 reps.



Front Plank

Rest on your elbows and tips toes. Keep your head and eyes looking straight down to the floor, not in front of you, and keep your spine in a neutral position. Be particularly careful of not over arching your low back inwards. Try to hold this position for at least 30 seconds.



Side Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, and keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the



Superman with Band or Weights

With a band around your foot and opposite hand, kneel on all fours, spend a moment to set a neutral spinal posture. With your tummy pulled in slight, slowly raise one arm and the opposite leg, hold the position for at least one second. Repeat for 10 to 20 reps each side.



Side Plank Level 2 (or on Physio Ball)

Lie on your side with legs straight, resting on one elbow. Raise your hips up off the floor so that your thighs are parallel with your torso. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. If you have shoulder problems perform on a Physio Ball or **Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 2**.



Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Keeping a neutral spine, push your hips upwards until your thighs & torso are level. Then lift one foot off the ground, hold momentarily lower & repeat 5 - 15 times for each leg.

Aim for 3 sets of each exercise, 1 to 2 times a day (except for the Deadlifts, do these once a day or once every other day).



Seated Leg Lift on Physio Ball

Sit upright with good posture and no slouching, slight pull your tummy in (feel the contraction of your Transversus Abdominis just inside your hip bones). Slowly lift one knee up a time without changing your lower back posture or tilting your pelvis. 10 reps.



Front Plank on Physio Ball

With tip toes on the floor, rest your elbows on a physio ball. Try to have your arms at 90 degrees to your torso. Keep your spine in a neutral position. Try to hold this position for at least 60 seconds. For a more advance version ("Stirring The Pot") move your arms back & forwards or in small circles.



Side Lying Leg Kick Forward

Lie on your side with neutral spinal curves. Maintain a straight spine by keeping a slight gap between your waist and the ground, and keep your top hip / shoulder directly over the bottom one. Move your leg forward and back for 10 to 20 reps, then repeat on the



Deadlifts / Good Mornings (Using band, bucket or weights)

Place a resistance band around the back of your shoulders (mimicking a barbell). Lightly hold onto the band with your hands. Hinge at the hips to bend forward whilst keeping your back fixed neutral spinal curves and go engaged.



Side Plank Level 2 (or on Physio Ball)

Lie on your side with knees bent, resting on one elbow. Raise your hips up off the floor so that your thighs are parallel with your torso. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. If you have shoulder problems perform **Side-Lying Leg Raise Level 2** instead.



Back Bridge with Single Leg Iso Holds

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on the ground. Keeping a neutral spine, push your hips upwards until your thighs & torso are level. Then lift one foot off the ground, hold momentarily lower & repeat 5 - 15 times for each leg.

An Introduction to:

**ADVANCED
CORE
EXERCISES**

CONGRATULATIONS! Now that you've completed the 8 week course, hopefully you have got in touch with your core in ways that you hadn't experienced before. I certainly know that was the case for me when I first started proper core training and moved away from traditional gym based knee raises, sit ups and abdominal crunches. In my case, I experienced reduced irritability of my trunk and spine (i.e. less niggles, aches and pains). This has also proved to be the case with many of my clients. One prime example of this was a patient who had undergone a discectomy operation on his spine (for a pinched nerve root causing pain down his leg). He would religiously want to see me in clinic every few weeks to massage and manipulate his spine, in order to help manage the remaining pain he had in his lower back. I was for ever telling him to do core exercises. When he finally took up my suggestion, went from having to see me in clinic every few weeks, to seeing me once or twice a year!

For me, I also had a new sense of stability, power, resilience and improved postural awareness that I wanted to take further. Whilst sadly I've had to give it up now, at the time I was fairly involved with martial arts and I found the core training seemed to greatly enhance my kicking and punching ability.

So, if you want to take things to the next level, the next couple of pages illustrate some more advanced exercises many of which I still incorporate into my own exercise routine and which you may like to explore now that you are a graduate of my Core Foundation Programme and are now a "Core Hero".



“Stirring the Pot” on Physio Ball

Start by resting your elbows on a physio ball in the plank position. Keep your core tight and slowly move your elbows in a circle. Circle one way for 5 to 10 repetitions (e.g. clockwise), then the other way (anti-clockwise) for 5 to 10 repetitions.



One Arm (Front) Plank

Rest on your elbows and tips toes with a relatively side stance. Keep your spine in a neutral position. Then, trying to keep your body as still as possible, straighten one arm so you are only resting on one elbow, hold for 15 seconds then repeat with the other arm.



Bird Dog Push Ups

Start in a “push up” position, perform a set of push ups, at the end of each repetition, when your arms are straight, raise one arm and the opposite leg, trying to keep your body as straight and still as possible.



Ab Roll Out On Physio Ball

Start in kneeling position, position your posture with neutral spinal curves, using a poll if you need to. Place your elbows on the ball and lean forward so the ball takes the weight of your elbows, move your upper arms up and down whilst focusing to maintain a tight core and static neutral spinal curves.



Knee Ups on Physio Ball

Position yourself in a push up position with feet resting on the ball. Bring your knees up towards your chest, then straighten your legs again. Continue this knee up and down movement, try to perform at least 10 repetitions.



Mountain Climbers on Physio Ball

Start in a kneeling position, set a neutral spine (using a poll if required). Place your hands on the ball and straighten your knee so your body weight is being supported by the ball. Slowly raise one knee up at a time, maintain a static posture of your torso.



Reverse Plank with Single Leg Raise

Resting on your hands and heels, start with both legs straight, core tight and spine on neutral. Maintain your spinal posture and pelvic position, then lift one leg followed by the other. Try not to allow any twist of your pelvis.



Reverse Table Top with Single Leg Raise

Resting on your hands and feet with bent knee, lift your bottom up so your thighs are parallel with your torso. Straight one leg then the other.



Single Leg Back Bridge

Lie on your back with your back in neutral and core (transversus engaged). With one knee bent push your hips up driving through your foot of the bent knee. Keep your spine neutral and core switch on. Repeat for the desired no. of reps and then with the other leg.



Single Leg Curls on Physio Ball

Lie on your back, initially with both feet on the ball, then using just one leg perform leg curls trying to keep your lower back neutral and core engaged.



Single Leg Back Bridge on Physio Ball

Rest the back of your shoulders on the ball, have your feet on the floor, then push your hips up so your thighs are parallel with our torso. Ensuring your core is engaged and lower back is neutral with a level pelvis (use a stick to help level the pelvis) lift one leg then the other.



(2 Point) Threading the Needle with Cable Resisted Rotation

Start by kneeling on all fours as if performing the threading the needle exercise but this time hold onto a cable or band and control the rotation resistance it causes (moving slowly & controlled throughout). For an increased challenge perform the exercise whilst raising one leg (donkey kick style).

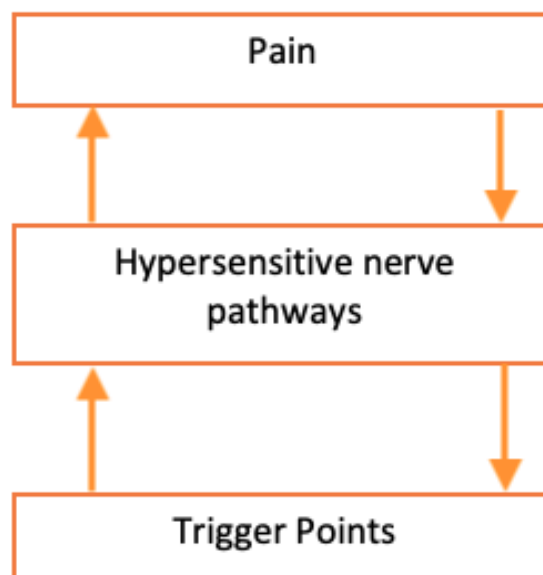
An Introduction to:

**BACK PAIN
RELIEF & SELF
MUSCLE
RELEASE
TECHNIQUES**

TRIGGER POINTS

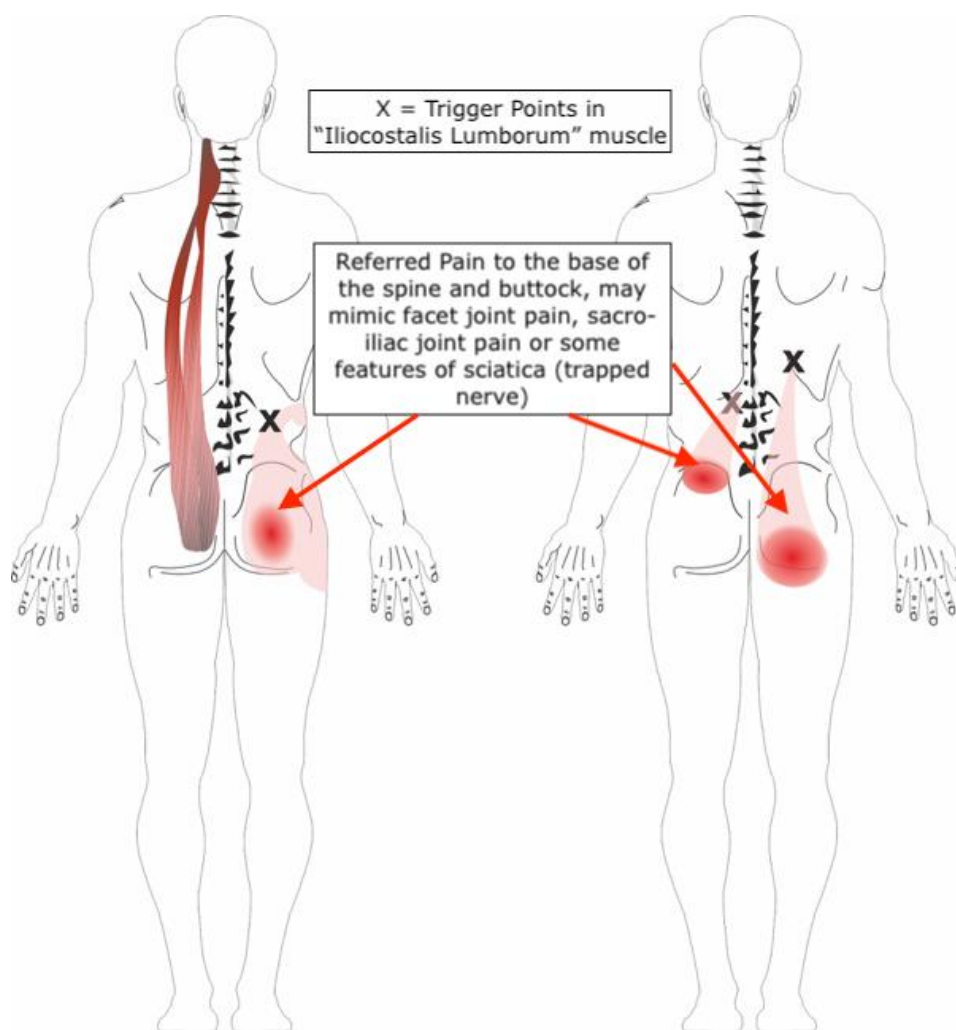
There is a strong association between under performing core muscles and back pain. For some people the reason for downloading this programme is to help their back pain (or help prevent it returning). If you are one such person you have likely experienced (and may still be experiencing) trigger point pain (*whether you have known about it or not*). Trigger points are essentially muscles knots, constituting islands of over active (hypertonic) muscles tissue.

Trigger Points are pretty much ubiquitous in the presence of chronic pain. They occur due to strains or overuse of the muscles concerned, this could be from direct injury to the muscle or overload from poor posture. Or it might be the result of adverse muscle balance whereby certain muscles are over developed or over recruited due (in part) to other muscle groups under performing, as might be the case with a “weak” core. Redressing such muscle imbalances (as well as improving segmental stability of the spine) with an effective core exercise programme (such as this one) may be one reason why core exercises may help improve back pain.



However, as well as causing localised (and referred) pain, trigger points may be caused and maintained by pain itself (from any source injured tissue not just the muscle i.e. a joint, ligament or disc). This results from pain causing over sensitisation of the (peripheral or central) nervous system signalling the muscles to “switch on” inappropriately. In the end what happens is a vicious circle as illustrated in the picture above. Even if and when the original source of pain is eliminated, the trigger points may remain and maintain the pain cycle. This may explain why some people undergo injections and even surgery for clearly identified pathology seen on MRI scans, yet still have pain afterwards.

The other conflicting characteristic of trigger points is that they cause referred pain patterns which can mimic and co-exist with pain from a degenerative joint, trapped nerve or other causes of back pain disorders, as is illustrated from the picture below.



So, what can be done if you are suffering with significant and persistent trigger point pain? A full discussion of trigger points, therapeutic interventions (including manual therapy and injections) would require several thousand words. Indeed, there are several good blogs, books, therapy tools and publications on this very subject. These are subjects I also touch on in my book [Back Pain Decoded](#).

For the purposes of introducing the topic here and to cut to the chase, one product I have found personally found extremely useful out of the many I have tried and reviewed over the years and which I recommend to my patients is the “back buddy” device, illustrated in the pictures below. In my experience, besides improving core stability, trigger point therapy is one of main pillars when it comes to managing chronic back pain without pills, injections or surgery. If back pain is part of your life, if core stability exercises does not provide a complete solution and if you want to banish it as much as possible, before resorting to more invasive measures, I would encourage you to give “Trigger Point Therapy” a try.

The main principle behind releasing your own trigger points is to explore (go hunting) for trigger points in your lower back muscles that might be the source (or at least be contributing) to your pain pattern. Since a trigger point may be quite some distance from the area where it is causing pain and so that you know where to go hunting, ideally use trigger point pain maps such those that can be found at <http://www.triggerpoints.net/>. Once you find relevant trigger points, using a device such as the back buddy press and hold the point using static pressure, without trying to “massage”, for around 30 to 90 seconds or until the pressure trigger points start to release. The releasing phenomena will be experienced by a diminishing of the referred pain that has been “lit up” by the initial pressure or a feeling of easing of the pressure / pain directly over the point itself. In the case of the latter, start by exerting enough pressure equating to up to a 7 out 10 on 1 to 10 pain scale and wait for the pressure pain to ease by at least 2 i.e. go down to 5 out of 10 or less. If nothing has eased after 3 mins max then you are either not on a (relevant) trigger point or trigger point pain is not part of your symptoms.

Spine Plus'

Core Zero to Core Hero Programme



If you have found this programme / document useful please let me and others know by leaving a review. Similarly if you have any constructive feedback, I'd love to hear about it, please drop me a line at reception@spineplus.co.uk.

Check out my book: **Back Pain Decoded**, available in hard copy from Amazon.

If you haven't done so already please consider following me / us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram +/- other social media groups to pose questions, and share experiences with fellow members and my therapy team.

With best wishes,

Rob



Robert Shanks
Co-Founding Director of Spine Plus Clinics