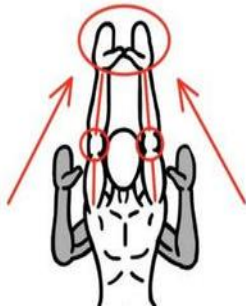


Muscle Activation Exercises

Below are exercises to help target common underactive muscles that can attribute to back pain. The goal with muscle activation exercises is to “rewire” your brain and teach your brain to “fire” these muscles when called upon to help eliminate muscle imbalances. Muscle activation exercises are good to perform in combination with stretching. If these exercises are new to you, start slow.



Front View



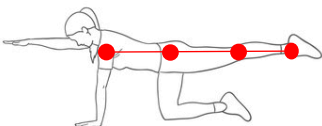
Side View

Scapular Wall Slides

1. Stand with the back of your hips and shoulders up against a wall.
2. Keep the back of your head touching the wall and tuck your chin (think about trying to make a double chin). Hold this position throughout the movement.
3. Engage your core by pressing your low back into the wall. This will bring your rib cage downward.
4. Bring your arms out to your sides and against the wall so that there is a 90-degree angle between your upper arms and torso. Your elbows should also be bent at a 90-degree angle.
5. While pressing the backs of your arms against the wall, raise your arms overhead as far as possible. Try not to let your arms move off the wall.
 - a. Try and keep your shoulders depressed as you go through the movement (leave space between your ears and shoulders).
 - b. If your shoulders feel tight at first, let your arms up from the wall.
6. Slowly lower your arms back to the starting position. That's 1 rep.
7. If this exercise is new to you, start slow and perform 1 to 2 sets of 10 reps a day and slowly increase as it gets easier.

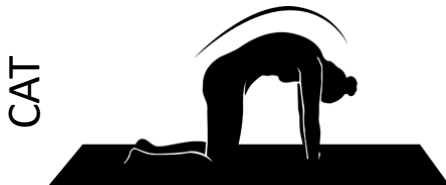
Bird Dog

1. Point one arm out straight in front and extend the opposite leg behind you – forming a straight line from your extended hand to your extended foot.
 - a. Maintain proper form by keeping your hips squared to the ground.
 - b. Be mindful of your low back. If it begins to sag, only raise your leg as high while keeping the back straight or see the “no arm variation” below.
2. Hold this position for about three seconds then return to your hands and knees.
3. Repeat the same movement with the opposite arm and leg.
4. That is one rep.



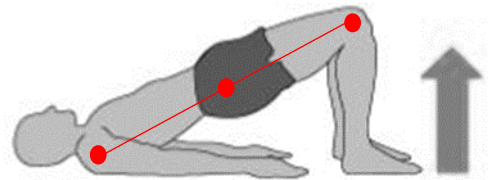
No arm variation: If you have difficulty with the dual arm and leg movement or having issues maintaining proper form, perform the movement by just extending one leg at a time and leave the arms on the ground.

Cat/Cow



1. Begin on your hand and knees, with a flat back. Your hands should be directly inline and below your shoulders and your knees directly inline and below your hips.
2. As you inhale, round your spine as high as you can by bringing your stomach towards the spine. You should resemble a cat arching its back. (Cat Pose)
3. Release your head toward the floor and relax.
4. Hold this position for two counts.
5. As you exhale, draw your stomach towards the floor and look forward. Relax your shoulders away from your ears. You should resemble the hanging belly of a cow. (Cow Pose)
6. Hold this position for two counts.
7. Continue to alternate between Cat and Cow position slowly.

Glute Bridge



1. Lie on your back and bend your knees to bring your feet in toward your hips.
2. Keep the soles of your feet flat on the ground and your knees shoulder-width apart.
3. Extend your arms out beside your body, keeping your palms flat on the ground.
4. Press your feet and arms into the floor as you slowly lift your hips upward off the ground.
 - a. Engaging the muscles in your buttocks.
 - b. At the top of your bridge, you should be able to draw a straight line from your shoulders, hips and knees.
5. Hold at the top for a two count.
6. Slowly return your hips to floor.