

Back pain is the bane of the desk-bound executive, with three out of four working adults suffering from it.

Whether the pain is temporary or chronic, this much is clear: Your back forms the foundation for your body to function effectively, and back pain is a signal that your body is dysfunctional in some way. The good news is that for the majority of sufferers, the pain can easily be reduced significantly or even eliminated within a few months.

Don't blame back pain on old age. While age can have an effect, it is more likely that you've been using your body incorrectly for a number of years. I know people in their 60s who have stronger backs than those in their 20s.

In truth, modern living is the prime culprit. Many of us sit for long periods, hunched over laptops, attending presentations and even having lunch at our desks. Exercise often involves pounding a treadmill, which puts more pressure on the back. Stress, too, contributes greatly, as it makes our bodies and certain muscles tighten up.

Your spine consists of 24 vertebrae; and usually it is the lumbar area (lower back) which bears the brunt of the pain because it supports the weight of most of the upper body. There are muscles in this area designed to hold you upright, but the more we sit down, the less they work and the weaker they get. The solution is to strengthen and stretch these muscles in a balanced way.

With this in mind, remember the following when travelling: Use a suitcase with wheels, so you don't strain your back. If possible, take a couple of smaller suitcases instead of a very big one which you may have to lift. When you're in the plane or in a car, sit back straight in your seat and make sure you're not hunching forward with your back rounded. Put a cushion between your lower back and the chair to provide support. Take frequent breaks to stretch, which will prevent the muscles in your back from becoming tight.

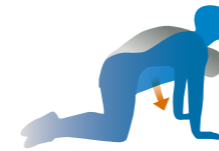
Ultimately, as sophisticated as we think we are, we are also animals and we need to move around. If you're overweight, lose it. Back pain and being overweight are linked. Get enough sleep and relieve stress in any way that suits you.

WELLNESS ON THE GO

BACK FOR GOOD

If you're prone to back pain, a long trip can be daunting. In the last of this six-part series, **MARK BAILEY**, resident mind and body coach for fast:track on BBC World News, tells you how to deal with it when on the road – and hopefully, get rid of it altogether.

BELOW, SIMPLE EXERCISES YOU CAN DO IN YOUR HOTEL ROOM OR AT HOME TO REMEDY BACK PAIN.



THE CAT Get down on all fours. Place your knees below your hips, and your hands below your shoulders. Pull your stomach in tight and

round your back as much as you can, hold for five seconds, then do the opposite: Keeping your stomach tight, push your core down to the ground so your back is concave. Hold for five, then repeat 10 times.

THE SUPERHERO

Stay on all fours. Pull your stomach in tight and gently stretch out your



right arm in front of you with your palm down. Now stretch out your left leg behind you and hold this position for five seconds, then lower your hand and knee to the ground. Swap sides and do the same. Repeat 10 times on each side.



HIP RAISE Lie down and bend your knees 90 degrees. Push your hips up so your

body forms a line from your knees down to your shoulders. Hold for five, then lower, and repeat 10 times.

PRONE COBRA

Turn over so you're facing the floor. Have



your arms by your sides and turn your palms outward. Gently raise your shoulders upwards, lifting your arms slightly off the ground, and hold for five. Then lower. Repeat this 10 times.

This circuit of exercises can be repeated a few times, and even though it is a small investment in time, it pays a big dividend in terms of pain management. ☒

More health tips at www.markbaileyonline.com

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