

back pain relief exercises yoga

back pain relief exercises yoga: a Comprehensive Guide to Alleviating Discomfort and Enhancing Spinal Health

Back pain relief exercises yoga can be a transformative practice for individuals seeking to alleviate chronic discomfort and improve their overall spinal well-being. This gentle yet powerful approach combines mindful movement with breathwork, offering a holistic solution to a prevalent health issue. By exploring a variety of yoga poses specifically designed to target back pain, you can strengthen supporting muscles, increase flexibility, and reduce tension that often contributes to aches and stiffness. This article will delve into the fundamental principles of using yoga for back pain relief, explore effective poses and sequences, and offer guidance on incorporating this practice safely and effectively into your routine. Understanding how specific yoga postures impact the spine, core, and surrounding musculature is key to unlocking its therapeutic benefits and fostering long-term spinal health.

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Understanding Back Pain and Yoga's Role

Back pain is a widespread ailment affecting millions worldwide, stemming from various factors such as poor posture, sedentary lifestyles, muscle strain, and underlying medical conditions. Conventional treatments often include medication, physical therapy, and lifestyle modifications. However, an increasing body of evidence points to the significant benefits of yoga as a complementary and sometimes primary approach to managing and alleviating back pain. Yoga's emphasis on controlled movements, breath awareness, and mindfulness can address both the physical and mental components of discomfort, promoting a more profound and sustainable form of relief.

The practice of yoga engages the body in a sequence of postures (asanas) that can stretch and strengthen the muscles supporting the spine, including the core, back, and glutes. By improving flexibility in the hamstrings and hip flexors, which are often tight and can contribute to lower back strain, yoga can help to realign the pelvis and reduce pressure on the lumbar spine. Furthermore, the meditative aspect of yoga encourages a greater awareness of bodily sensations, allowing individuals to identify and release tension patterns that may be exacerbating their pain.

Key Principles of Yoga for Back Pain Relief

When approaching yoga for back pain relief, certain core principles are paramount to ensure safety and maximize efficacy. The primary goal is not to force the body into extreme positions but to cultivate gentle, controlled movements that promote healing and strengthen the affected areas. Understanding these principles will guide your practice and ensure a positive experience.

Listen to Your Body

This is arguably the most critical principle. Never push through sharp pain. Yoga is about finding your edge, not exceeding it. If a pose causes discomfort or pain, modify it or come out of it. Your body will communicate its limits, and respecting these signals is essential for preventing further injury and promoting recovery.

Focus on Breath Awareness (Pranayama)

The breath is the cornerstone of yoga. Deep, conscious breathing helps to calm the nervous system, reduce muscle tension, and increase oxygen flow to the tissues. Inhaling can help to lengthen the spine, while exhaling can encourage relaxation and release. Integrating breath with movement enhances the therapeutic benefits of each pose.

Proper Alignment

Correct alignment in each yoga pose is crucial for targeting the intended muscles and avoiding undue stress on the spine. Pay close attention to instructions regarding pelvic tilt, spinal curves, and limb placement. Seeking guidance from a qualified yoga instructor, especially when starting, can significantly improve your understanding of proper form.

Gentle Progression

Begin with foundational poses and gradually progress as your strength and flexibility improve. Avoid attempting advanced postures too soon. A slow, consistent practice is more beneficial than infrequent, intense sessions. Allow your body time to adapt and build resilience.

Core Engagement

A strong core is vital for supporting the spine. Many yoga poses inherently engage the abdominal and back muscles. Learning to subtly activate these muscles during your practice provides a protective corset around your lower back, reducing the risk of strain.

Gentle Yoga Poses for Back Pain Relief

Incorporating specific yoga poses into your routine can directly address common causes of back pain by gently stretching tight muscles, improving mobility, and promoting relaxation. These poses are generally safe for most individuals experiencing mild to moderate back discomfort. Always start slowly and focus on the quality of movement over quantity.

Cat-Cow Pose (Marjaryasana-Bitilasana)

This dynamic flow is excellent for warming up the spine and improving its flexibility. It involves alternating between arching and rounding the back, promoting spinal articulation and relieving stiffness.

- Start on your hands and knees, with your wrists directly under your shoulders and knees under your hips.
- As you inhale, drop your belly towards the floor, arch your back, and lift your gaze (Cow Pose).
- As you exhale, round your spine towards the ceiling, tuck your chin to your chest, and draw your navel towards your spine (Cat Pose).
- Continue this rhythmic movement with your breath for several rounds.

Child's Pose (Balasana)

A deeply restorative pose, Child's Pose offers gentle stretching for the back, hips, and thighs. It is a wonderful pose for resting and de-stressing the spine.

- Begin on your hands and knees.
- Bring your big toes to touch and widen your knees to hip-width apart or wider.
- Exhale and fold your torso forward, resting your forehead on the mat or a block.
- Extend your arms forward or bring them alongside your body, palms facing up.
- Breathe deeply and allow your body to relax into the pose.

Supine Spinal Twist (Supta Matsyendrasana)

This gentle twist helps to release tension in the spine and massage the abdominal organs. It can be particularly effective for relieving tightness in the lower back.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
- Extend your arms out to the sides at shoulder height, palms facing down.
- Inhale, and as you exhale, gently drop both knees to one side, keeping your shoulders pressed into the mat.
- Turn your head to look in the opposite direction of your knees, if comfortable.
- Hold for several breaths, then repeat on the other side.

Knees-to-Chest Pose (Apanasana)

This pose gently releases tension in the lower back and massages the abdominal organs. It's a great way to wind down at the end of the day.

- Lie on your back.
- Inhale and draw both knees towards your chest.
- Gently hug your knees with your hands or forearms.
- You can gently rock side to side to massage your lower back.
- Hold for several breaths, focusing on releasing tension with each exhale.

Strengthening Poses for Spinal Support

While gentle stretching is crucial, building strength in the muscles that support the spine is equally important for long-term back pain relief and prevention. These poses focus on engaging the core, glutes, and back muscles, creating a more stable and resilient spinal column.

Plank Pose (Phalakasana)

Plank Pose is a fantastic full-body strengthener, particularly targeting the core muscles, which are essential for spinal stability. It also strengthens the shoulders and arms.

- Start in a tabletop position (hands and knees).
- Step your feet back one at a time, so your body forms a straight line from your head to your heels.
- Engage your core by drawing your navel towards your spine.

- Keep your neck long and gaze slightly forward or down.
- Avoid letting your hips sag or rise too high. Hold for as long as you can maintain good form, gradually increasing the duration.

Locust Pose (Salabhasana)

Locust Pose is designed to strengthen the muscles of the back, including the erector spinae, and the glutes, which play a vital role in supporting the lower back.

- Lie on your stomach with your arms alongside your body, palms facing down.
- Keep your legs straight and your feet hip-width apart.
- Inhale and lift your head, chest, arms, and legs off the floor.
- Engage your glutes and back muscles to lift.
- Keep your neck long and avoid straining. Hold for a few breaths, then exhale to release.

Bridge Pose (Setu Bandhasana)

Bridge Pose is excellent for strengthening the glutes and hamstrings, which in turn can help to support the pelvis and reduce lower back strain. It also opens the chest and shoulders.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, hip-width apart, close to your hips.
- Inhale and press into your feet to lift your hips off the floor.
- You can interlace your fingers beneath your back and roll your shoulders under to deepen the chest opening.
- Keep your thighs parallel. Hold for several breaths, then exhale to gently lower back down.

Restorative Yoga for Deep Relaxation

Restorative yoga is characterized by holding poses for extended periods, often with the support of props like bolsters, blankets, and blocks. This approach encourages deep relaxation, reduces stress, and allows the body to release chronic tension, which is often a significant contributor to back pain. These poses are designed to be profoundly calming for the nervous system.

Supported Fish Pose (Matsyasana Variation)

This pose gently opens the chest and shoulders, counteracting the effects of prolonged sitting or slouching, which can contribute to back pain. Supported Fish Pose offers a gentle backbend with ample support.

- Place a bolster lengthwise on your mat.
- Sit with your back towards the bolster, allowing your shoulder blades to rest on its edge.
- Gently lie back over the bolster, allowing your head and hips to be supported.
- Your legs can be extended or bent with the soles of your feet together.
- Allow your arms to rest by your sides or overhead.
- Hold for 5-10 minutes, breathing deeply.

Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose (Viparita Karani)

This inversion is incredibly restorative, promoting circulation, reducing swelling in the legs and feet, and calming the nervous system. It can also provide gentle relief to the lower back by decompressing the spine.

- Sit with one hip against a wall.
- Swing your legs up the wall as you lie back onto the floor.
- Your hips should be as close to the wall as comfortable.
- You can place a folded blanket or bolster under your hips for added comfort and support.
- Rest your arms by your sides or on your belly.
- Hold for 5-15 minutes, allowing your body to relax completely.

Creating a Safe and Effective Yoga Practice

Establishing a yoga practice for back pain relief requires a thoughtful and informed approach to ensure you are maximizing benefits while minimizing risks. Consistency, proper guidance, and self-awareness are key components of a successful journey towards a healthier spine.

Consult Your Healthcare Provider

Before starting any new exercise program, especially if you have pre-existing back pain or a diagnosed condition, it is essential to consult with your doctor or a qualified healthcare professional. They can advise you on whether yoga is appropriate for your specific situation and any modifications you might need.

Seek Qualified Instruction

If you are new to yoga or new to practicing for back pain, attending classes with a certified yoga instructor who has experience with therapeutic yoga is highly recommended. They can provide personalized guidance on proper alignment, offer modifications for poses, and ensure you are practicing safely and effectively.

Start Slowly and Gradually Increase Duration

Begin with shorter practice sessions, perhaps 15-20 minutes a few times a week. As your body becomes accustomed to the movements and you gain strength and flexibility, you can gradually increase the duration and frequency of your practice. Consistency is more important than intensity.

Utilize Props

Props such as yoga blocks, blankets, bolsters, and straps are invaluable tools for making poses more accessible and comfortable. They can provide support, deepen stretches safely, and help you maintain proper alignment, especially when your body is feeling tight or sore.

Modify Poses as Needed

Never feel pressured to perform a pose exactly as demonstrated. Listen to your body and make modifications. For example, if a forward fold is too intense for your lower back, bend your knees generously. If a backbend causes discomfort, reduce the range of motion.

Hydration and Nutrition

Staying well-hydrated and maintaining a balanced diet can significantly impact your body's ability to heal and recover. Ensure you are drinking enough water throughout the day, especially before and after your yoga practice.

FAQ

Q: How often should I practice yoga for back pain relief?

A: For noticeable benefits, aim for a consistent practice of at least 3-4 times per week. Shorter, daily sessions can also be very effective. Listen to your body and adjust the frequency based on how you

feel.

Q: Are there any yoga poses I should avoid if I have back pain?

A: Generally, poses that involve deep compression of the spine, extreme twists, or sudden forceful movements should be approached with caution or avoided. This can include advanced inversions, deep backbends, and intense twisting poses, especially without proper guidance. Always consult with a qualified instructor or healthcare provider.

Q: Can yoga help with sciatica pain?

A: Yes, certain yoga poses, particularly those that gently stretch the piriformis muscle and release tension in the hips and glutes, can be very beneficial for sciatica. Poses like Pigeon Pose (modified), Supine Spinal Twist, and Happy Baby Pose can offer relief. However, it's crucial to practice these gently and avoid anything that exacerbates your sciatic pain.

Q: What is the difference between active yoga and restorative yoga for back pain?

A: Active yoga focuses on building strength and flexibility through dynamic movements and holding poses for shorter durations, engaging muscles more actively. Restorative yoga emphasizes deep relaxation, using props to support the body in passive poses held for extended periods, promoting healing and reducing stress. Both can be beneficial, and often a combination is most effective.

Q: How long does it take to feel relief from back pain with yoga?

A: The timeline for relief varies greatly depending on the individual, the cause of their back pain, and the consistency of their practice. Some individuals may experience immediate relief from muscle tension, while others may notice significant improvement in chronic pain over several weeks or months of regular practice. Patience and consistency are key.

Q: Can beginners with back pain do yoga?

A: Absolutely. Beginners with back pain can and should start with yoga, but it is crucial to begin with gentle classes, inform the instructor about your condition, and focus on foundational poses with proper alignment. Restorative yoga and beginner-focused classes are excellent starting points.

Q: Should I use props like blocks and bolsters for back pain yoga?

A: Yes, props are highly recommended for back pain relief yoga. They help to support the body, improve alignment, reduce strain, and allow you to hold poses comfortably for longer periods, which

is essential for relaxation and therapeutic benefits.

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back pain relief exercises yoga: 21 Yoga Exercises for Lower Back Pain Morgan Sutherland, 2018-12-12 21 Yoga Exercises for Lower Back Pain If you find yourself sitting or standing for long periods of time, there's a good possibility that you've experienced low back pain at one point or another. If the pain is excruciating, you should always check with your doctor to rule out the possibility of deeper conditions, such as a herniated or bulging disc. Multiple studies have proven that yoga trumped usual care in a 2011 study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine. When researchers followed 300 people with low back pain for more than a year, they found that the half who were randomly assigned to do yoga reported better back function (although similar levels of pain) throughout the course of the study. A 2017 study from the University of Maryland School of Medicine found that a regular yoga practice was linked to pain relief and improved function and might be worth considering as a form of treatment for people suffering from chronic nonspecific low back pain. Instead of popping pain pills and opting for invasive surgery, practicing yoga is a cost-effective alternative. Not only is yoga a more comprehensive way to stretch and strengthen the muscles and fascia of the entire body, but it engages all the fascial systems that help to hold everything together, providing stability to the lumbar spine, sacrum, and pelvis. Stretch your lower back pain away with 21 Yoga Exercises for Lower Back Pain. Practicing these specific 21 yoga poses can help lengthen your spine, stretch and strengthen your muscles, and return your back to its proper alignment.

back pain relief exercises yoga: Grieve's Modern Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy E-Book Deborah Falla, Jeremy Lewis, Christopher McCarthy, Chad E Cook, Michele Sterling, 2024-04-02 Originally edited by Gregory Grieve, a founder of modern manual therapy, the fifth edition of Grieve's Modern Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy continues to offer contemporary evidence, models of diagnosis and practice that make this one of the most highly respected reference books for physiotherapists. This edition has been fully updated to provide an overview of the latest science in a rapidly evolving field. It includes detailed directions for research-informed patient care for a range of musculoskeletal disorders, as well as up-to-date information on the global burden, research methodologies, measurements, and principles of assessment and management. A new international editorial board, with experience in both research and clinical practice, bring a truly comprehensive perspective to this book, meaning those practising musculoskeletal physiotherapy today will find it highly clinically relevant to their work. - Edited by an internationally recognised editorial board - brings expertise in both research and clinical practice - Fully updated with the latest published evidence - Clear guidance on evidence-based contemporary practice - Management of conditions relating to both the vertebral column and peripheral joints - Updated reviews on the science and practice of a wide range of treatment modalities - Principles of effective communication, screening, clinical reasoning, lifestyle considerations, behavioural change and self-management - Summary boxes and clinical tips to support clinical assessment and management - More than 300 figures and illustrations - Global burden of musculoskeletal disorders - including history, epidemiology and new models of care - A range of new research methodologies, including N of 1 research designs,

systematic reviews and meta-analyses, population-based cohort studies, consensus research and response analyses in musculoskeletal research - How to navigate the endless wave of information and assess different levels of evidence - New measures - New chapter on cost analyses and value-based care - Digital rehabilitation methods

back pain relief exercises yoga: Multidisciplinary Spine Care Carl E. Noe, 2022-06-27 This book presents multiple aspects of spine care from the perspective of different disciplines. It's organized by sections focused on non-operative care, spine injections and procedures, perioperative care, operative care, pediatric care, and special topics. Each chapter has been written by a clinician whose active practice involves the topic of their chapter. Practical and clinically relevant, this book educates any practitioner who cares for patients with back and neck pain and other spine conditions about implementing a multidisciplinary team to treat the spine.

back pain relief exercises yoga: Somatic Yoga: Integrating Body-Mind Connection Through Mindful Movement Boreas M.L. Saage, Discover the transformative practice of somatic yoga in this comprehensive guide to mindful movement and body awareness. 'Somatic Yoga: Integrating Body-Mind Connection Through Mindful Movement' offers a fresh approach to wellness that goes beyond traditional yoga forms by focusing on the internal experience of movement. This practical guide introduces you to somatic training techniques that can be seamlessly integrated into modern daily life. Through accessible explanations of the philosophy and anatomical foundations of somatic practice, you'll understand how your nervous system, fascia, and muscular chains interact to create your unique body experience. The book provides structured morning routines to gently awaken body awareness, midday micro-practices for workplace stress reduction, and evening sequences for releasing tension and improving sleep quality. Each section includes detailed instructions for different body regions—addressing common problem areas like the spine, shoulder-neck region, and pelvic floor with targeted somatic approaches. You'll learn how to:- Develop greater body awareness through mindful movement practices- Implement brief somatic training sessions that fit into busy schedules- Release tension patterns that contribute to discomfort and stress- Improve posture and movement efficiency in everyday activities- Connect breath with movement for enhanced energy flow- Build a sustainable personal practice that evolves with your needs. The book also addresses modifications for those with physical limitations, older practitioners, and individuals experiencing high stress levels, making somatic yoga accessible to diverse populations. Whether you're new to body-mind practices or looking to deepen your existing yoga experience, this guide provides the tools to cultivate a more conscious relationship with your body. Through regular somatic yoga practice, you'll discover how mindful movement can lead to improved body awareness, reduced stress, and greater overall wellbeing in your everyday life.

back pain relief exercises yoga: Healing Yoga: Proven Postures to Treat Twenty Common Ailments from Backache to Bone Loss, Shoulder Pain to Bunions, and More Loren Fishman, 2015-01-05 To many of his patients [Dr. Fishman] is a miracle worker. —Jane E. Brody, New York Times Designed for yoga practitioners ranging from beginners to experienced, Healing Yoga shows how every reader can not only heal, but can also help diagnose, their specific medical conditions. Written by internationally recognized physical and rehabilitative medicine physician Loren Fishman, MD, this guide unites Western medical information with the practice of yoga. Depending on the severity and chronicity of the ailment, the advice and postures in this book can provide a doctor's immediate assistance—at home, and without cost or fancy equipment, drugs or surgery. Addresses 20 common conditions: headache, weight gain, the common cold, insomnia, bone health, scoliosis, PMS, stress, depression, 8 different types of back pain, and others. Includes 170 photographs that illustrate healing techniques Dr. Fishman has invented, refined, and validated with thousands of patients, through decades of experimentation. Features Dr. Fishman's own evidence-based, pioneering, and prize-winning clinical research on rotator cuff problems (1,200 cases, 90 percent success rate), osteoporosis, and scoliosis. Offers insights learned directly from Dr. Fishman's teacher, BKS Iyengar, the founder of "Iyengar Yoga," as well as how Dr. Fishman went beyond his early training to discover groundbreaking curative techniques.

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how to find a qualified practitioner. Beyond specific techniques, *The Spine's Motion Handbook* emphasizes the importance of lifestyle modifications for long-term spine health. You will discover how simple changes in daily habits, such as maintaining proper posture and managing stress, can significantly impact your spine's longevity and resilience. With *The Spine's Motion Handbook* as your trusted guide, you will gain the knowledge, confidence, and tools to take ownership of your spine's health. Embrace a life free from pain, rich in mobility, and brimming with vitality. Invest in your spine's well-being today and reap the rewards of a healthier, more fulfilling life. If you like this book, write a review!

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E-Book James J. Yue, Richard Guyer, J. Patrick Johnson, Larry T. Khoo, Stephen H. Hochschuler, 2010-12-03 *The Comprehensive Treatment of the Aging Spine* provides all the state-of-the-art coverage you need on both operative and non-operative treatments for different clinical pathologies of the aging spine. Dr James Yue and a team of talented, pioneering orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgeons cover hot topics like minimally invasive fusion, dynamic stabilization, state-of-the-art intraspinal and biologic devices, and more...in print and online. Search the full text and access a video library online at expertconsult.com. Master the very latest techniques and technologies through detailed step-by-step surgical instructions, tips, and pearls. Stay current on the state-of-the-art in intraspinal and biologic devices—such as Stent (Alphatec) and Optimesh Spineology; thoracic techniques—kyphoplasty, vertebroplasty, and spacers; and conservative treatment modalities—including injection therapies, acupuncture, and yoga. Make expert-guided decisions on techniques and device selection using the collective clinical experience of pioneering editors and contributors. Identify the advantages and disadvantages for the full range of available microsurgical and endoscopic techniques for management of cervical, thoracic, and lumbar spine pathology—minimally invasive fusion, reconstruction, decompression, and dynamic stabilization.

back pain relief exercises yoga: Yoga Therapy & Integrative Medicine Larry Payne, Ph.D., E-RYT500, YTRX, Terra Gold, M.A., L.Ac., E-RYT500, YTRX, Eden Goldman, D.C., E-RYT500, YTRX, 2014-11-30 Use friendly reference guide detailing a wide range of approaches, the book is designed to educate medical professionals, students, yoga teachers, academia, and the general public on alternative treatment methods and the game-changing therapeutic framework for Yoga Therapy's application as a complementary treatment approach.

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empowers you to embark on a transformative healing journey. Through gentle yoga practices, mindfulness, and expert guidance, you'll find relief from postpartum discomforts and aches while nurturing your emotional well-being. Reconnect with your body, regain strength, and find solace in the healing power of postnatal yoga.

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back pain relief exercises yoga: *Therapeutic Stretching in Physical Therapy* Eyal Lederman, 2013-08-19 Prepared by an international authority, *Therapeutic Stretching: Towards a Functional Approach* offers a highly accessible account of the latest information regarding the role of therapeutic stretching in the management of restricted range of movement (ROM) disorders. Richly illustrated throughout, this exciting new volume covers the physiological basis of stretching, explores its classification and examines what is normal and abnormal in terms of ROM. Chapters then explain the processes that are associated with ROM loss and recovery as well as what makes stretching effective. The experience of pain, sensitization and pain tolerance in relation to stretching and ROM recovery are also discussed. Embracing the latest scientific research, this revolutionary book debunks many traditionally accepted stretching theories and associated techniques and supplants them with a more robust, scientifically valid system of practice. Accompanied by a range of practical on-line videos and over 150 photographs, this volume will be ideal for all manual and physical therapists, sports and personal trainers, and athletes who require special movement ranges. This is a highly enjoyable and well presented book that I recommend for any clinician from student to experienced practitioner. It is suitable for all physiotherapists, manual therapists, sports physiotherapists/therapists, strength and conditioning coaches, sports scientists, athletes and patients who would like to understand, recover and improve their range and ease of movement. Reviewed by: Jimmy Reynolds, Head of Sports Medicine - Academy, Ipswich Town Football Club, Date: Oct 14 - Helps transform thinking about the therapeutic value of stretching and how it is best applied in the clinical setting - Examines the difference between therapeutic and recreational stretching - Focuses on the use of stretching in conditions where individuals experience a loss in range of movement (ROM) - Explores what makes stretching effective, identifying behaviour as a main driving force for adaptive changes - Discusses the experience of pain, sensitization and pain tolerance in relation to stretching and ROM recovery - Contains over 150 photographs and 45 minutes of video describing this new revolutionary approach - Applicable to a variety of perspectives including osteopathy, chiropractic, physical therapy, sports and personal trainers - Ideal for experienced practitioners as well as those taking undergraduate and postgraduate courses

back pain relief exercises yoga: *Low Back Pain* John Ebnezar, 2012-04 This manual covers all types of lower back pain. Beginning with an introduction to low back ache, the text examines uncommon disorders, such as spina bifida, scoliosis and tuberculosis spine, and then common conditions, for example, intervertebral disk prolapse. With nearly 270 images and illustrations, the book also discusses the common causes of lower back pain – poor posture, sedentary lifestyle; and the uncommon causes such as diseases of the lower spine, or radiating pain from the abdominal and genitourinary organs. Short summaries, clinical photographs, X-rays and anecdotes are provided for easy reference and to help understanding.

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extensive survey of what those with back problems experience and the treatments they have found that really work. Are drugs or surgery the answer? What about the many complementary therapies available? Or should you try a change of diet, daily routine and exercise? Answers to these and many more questions are answered with honesty by those who have actually tried them. Why suffer longer with this miserable and debilitating problem when you can almost certainly find something here to relieve the problem and improve your quality of life. This book covers complementary treatments, posture, surgery and drugs and also features an illustrated section of effective exercises you can perform in your own home.

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