



# Support your back by building muscle

One of the most common reasons adults see a doctor is due to low back pain. Worldwide, back pain is the single leading cause of disability, preventing many people from engaging in work as well as other everyday activities.

The risk for low back pain significantly increases as we age or become more sedentary. Although treatment for low back pain typically works, it may not last. In fact, more than two-thirds of people who recover from this type of pain will have another bout within a year. However, that doesn't mean there aren't ways to keep your back strong and healthy.

One of the most valuable things you can do for your back is to strengthen your glute and core muscles. That's because these muscles work synergistically to stabilize your spine and support your back. The glutes are a group of three muscles which make up the gluteal region commonly known as the buttocks. The functions of the muscles include extension, abduction, external rotation, and internal rotation of the hip joint. When we are inactive for long periods of time, our glutes essentially shut down. As a result, our low back muscles (as well as hips and knees) may begin to overcompensate, which can lead to pain or injury. Without strong core muscles within the abdominals and back, your body will rely more on ligaments and bones which places more stress on discs.

As early as age 25, the average person starts losing muscle. To counteract this, you should aim to do 30 minutes of strength training\* at least two times per week. Add a few of these key exercises into your strength training regimen to target the glutes and core:

- Deadlifts
- Glute kick backs
- Glute bridges
- Reverse and side lunges
- “Dead bug”
- Back extensions

Most of these exercises can be performed with just your body weight or a set of light dumbbells or resistance band. To learn how to properly perform each of them, you can view a series of low back workout from home videos at [www.independenthealth.com/healthhub](http://www.independenthealth.com/healthhub).

Keep in mind that building muscle is not only a great way to avoid or alleviate back pain. It can also improve your overall strength and balance, reduce your risk for injury and disease, increase your metabolic rate so that your body burns more fat, and boost your mood and confidence.

*\*Before starting any exercise program, talk with your doctor first. He or she can advise you on what type of program may or may not be the best fit based on your physical ability.*