

# PILATES FOR BACK PAIN

Back pain is caused by a number of different factors, but if you have pain, the cause probably fits into one or a combination of the following three categories:

1. A ligament sprain or muscle strain
2. Degenerative changes
3. Discogenic pain, commonly known as "slipped disc"

## SPRAIN/STRAIN

The most common cause of back pain involves the overuse of the muscles and ligaments. Your back is a very complex and mobile structure that requires very strong muscles and ligaments to function properly. If one or a group of these structures become irritated they will send a distress signal to your brain which in turn causes the muscles to spasm as a protective mechanism.

## DEGENERATIVE CHANGES

Degenerative disc disease (DDD) is a condition in which degenerative change to the bony structure of your back cause pain. Like any other moving part the joints of your back will eventually wear out. How quickly this happens depends upon the density of your bones and the amount of wear and tear you expose your back to. Pain from DDD is not directly related to the bony changes or degeneration but rather the inflammation that these changes may cause. DDD related pain will often fluctuate from low level to quite severe depending on the inflammation levels.

Note that disc degeneration is part of the natural process of ageing and does not always lead to low back pain. In fact, the incidence of low back pain actually goes down as we age, despite the fact that your discs are degenerating.

## DISCOGENIC PAIN

In between each bone in you back you have a disc which is made of very thick fibrous tissue that surrounds a gel core. Pain can be caused when that gel core is pushed out of place and presses on a sensitive structure like a nerve. A disc can push out of place for a number of reasons. Sometimes it is caused by doing a lot of heavy physical labour, especially in a forward flexed position with twisting. A disc can be painful right at the place of the injury, or can cause pain to radiate down a nerve in the leg.

## HOW PILATES CAN HELP

A Pilates instructor can provide exercises to help increase muscle strength or 'core stability' and to stretch out tight muscles. Loosening tight joints and muscles and ease symptoms. Suggestions on modifying normal activities to prevent re-injury or further irritation to the back. In conjunction with your doctor, physical therapist and other health practitioners, advise on an overall exercise program to make you more fit and strong in order to help avoid injuring your back further. Exercises on the mat and reformer can be helpfully in strengthening and stretching out back muscles and abdominal muscles leading to overall support for the back. Work on the reformer can be supportive as well as strengthening while mat work can provide an additional challenge as support is limited.

To find out more how Pilates and Pilates Patio can help strengthen and restore your back to it's original and strong state, please contact us as 613-422-3638 or [lanipilatespatio.com](mailto:lanipilatespatio.com)



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