

Therapeutic Ball: Back Exercises

Introduction

Here are some examples of typical exercises for your condition. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercise if you start to have pain. Your doctor or physical therapist will tell you when you can start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

To prepare, make sure that your ball is the right size for you. When inflated and firm, it should allow you to sit with your hips and knees bent at about a 90-degree angle (like the letter L).

How to do the exercises

Seated position on ball



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1. Use this exercise to get used to moving on the ball and to find your best sitting position.
2. Sit comfortably on the ball with your feet about hip-width apart. If you feel unsteady, rest your hands on the ball near your hips.
3. As you do this exercise, try to keep your shoulders and upper body relaxed and still.
4. Using your stomach and back muscles to move your pelvis, roll the ball forward. This will round your back.
5. Still using your stomach and back muscles, roll the ball back. You will arch your back.
6. Repeat this rounding-arching motion a few times.
7. Stop in between the two positions, where your back is not rounded or arched. This is called your neutral position.

Pelvic rotation



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1. Sit tall on the ball.
2. Slowly rotate your hips in a circle pattern. Keep the movement focused at your hips.
3. Repeat, but circle in the other direction.
4. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Postural sitting



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1. Use this position to find a stable, relaxed posture on the ball. You can use this position as your starting point for other ball exercises. If you feel unsteady on the ball, start on a chair first.
2. Sit on a ball or chair, with your feet planted straight in front of you.
3. Imagine that a string at the top of your head is pulling you straight up. Think of yourself as 2 inches taller than you are.
4. Slightly tuck your chin.
5. Keep your shoulders back and relaxed.

Knee extension



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1. Sit tall on the ball with your feet planted in front of you, hip-width apart. As you do this exercise, avoid slumping your shoulders and arching your back.
2. Rest your hands on the ball near your hip or a steady object next to you. (If you feel very stable on the ball, rest your hands in your lap or at your side.)
3. Slowly straighten one leg at the knee. Slowly lower it back down. Repeat with the other leg.
4. Repeat this exercise 8 to 12 times.

Roll-ups



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1. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet resting on the floor.
2. Lay the ball on your thighs. Rest your hands up high on the ball.
3. Raising your head and shoulder blades, roll the ball up your thighs. Exhale as you roll up.
4. If this is hard on your neck, gently support your lower head and upper neck with one hand. Don't use that hand to pull your head up.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Ball curls



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1. Lie on your back with your ankles resting on the ball, knees straight.
2. Use your legs to roll the exercise ball toward you. Allow your knees to bend and move closer to your chest.
3. Pause briefly, and then roll the ball to the starting position. Try to keep the ball rolling straight. You will feel the muscles in your lower belly working.
4. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Bridge with ball under legs



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1. Lie on your back with your legs up, calves resting on the ball. For more challenge, rest your heels on the ball.
2. Look up at the ceiling, and keep your chin relaxed. You can place a small pillow under your head or neck for comfort.
3. With your arms by your side, press your hands onto the floor for stability.
4. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling in your belly button toward your spine.
5. Push your heels down toward the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line.
6. Try to keep the ball steady. Hold for about 6 seconds as you continue to breathe normally.
7. Slowly lower your hips back down to the floor.
8. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Ball curls with bridge



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1. Start flat on your back with your ankles resting on the ball.
2. Look up at the ceiling, and keep your chin relaxed. You can place a small pillow under your head or neck for comfort.
3. With your arms by your side, press your hands onto the floor for stability.
4. Tighten your belly muscles by pulling in your belly button toward your spine.
5. Push your heels down toward the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line.
6. While holding the bridge position, roll the ball toward you with your heels. Keep your hips as level as you can.
7. Pause briefly, and then roll the ball back out. Try to keep the ball rolling straight. You will feel the muscles in your lower belly working as you straighten your legs.
8. Lower your hips, and return to your starting position.
9. Repeat 8 to 12 times.
10. When you can keep your body and the ball steady throughout this exercise, you're ready for more challenge. Try keeping your hips raised while rolling the ball out, holding the bridge, and rolling back, a few times in a row.

Praying mantis



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1. Kneel upright with the ball in front of you.

2. To start, clasp your hands together. Rest them on the ball in front of you.
3. As you do this exercise, keep your back and hips straight and tighten your belly and buttocks muscles. Keep your knees in place.
4. Press on the ball with your arms. Lean forward from the knees. This rolls the ball forward. You will bear most of your weight on your arms.
5. If your back starts to ache, you've gone too far. Pull back a bit.
6. Roll back to the start position.
7. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Walk-out plank on ball



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1. Kneel over the ball. Place your hands on the floor in front of you.
2. Walk your hands forward until your legs are straight on the ball. This is the plank position.
3. When in plank position, hold your body straight and tighten your belly and buttocks muscles. Keep your chin slightly tucked.
4. Roll as far forward as you can without losing your balance or letting your hips drop. You may stop with the ball under your thighs, or even under your knees or shins.
5. Hold a few seconds, then walk your hands back and return to the start position.
6. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Push-up with thighs on ball



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1. Kneel over the ball. Place your hands on the floor in front of you.
2. Walk your hands forward until your legs are straight on the ball. This is the plank position.
3. When in plank position, hold your body straight and tighten your belly and buttocks muscles. Keep your chin slightly tucked.
4. Roll as far forward as you can without losing your balance or letting your hips drop. You may stop with the ball under your thighs, or even under your knees or shins.
5. Bend your elbows. Slowly lower your body toward the ground as far as you can without losing your balance.
6. If your wrists hurt, try moving your hands a little farther apart so they're not right under your shoulders.
7. Slowly straighten your arms.
8. Do 8 to 12 of these push-ups.

Wall squat with ball



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1. Stand facing away from a wall. Place your feet about shoulder-width apart.
2. Place the ball between your middle back and the wall. Move your feet out in front of you so they are about a foot in front of your hips.
3. Keep your arms at your sides, or put your hands on your hips.
4. Slowly squat down as if you are going to sit in a chair, rolling your back over the ball as you squat. The ball should move with you but stay pressed into the wall.
5. Be sure that your knees do not go in front of your toes as you squat.
6. Hold for 6 seconds.
7. Slowly rise to your standing position.
8. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

Child's pose with ball



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1. Kneeling upright with your back straight, rest your hands on the ball in front of you.
2. Breathe out as you bend at the hips, and roll the ball forward. Lower your chest toward the ground, and drop your hips back toward your heels.
3. To stretch your upper back and shoulders, hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

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