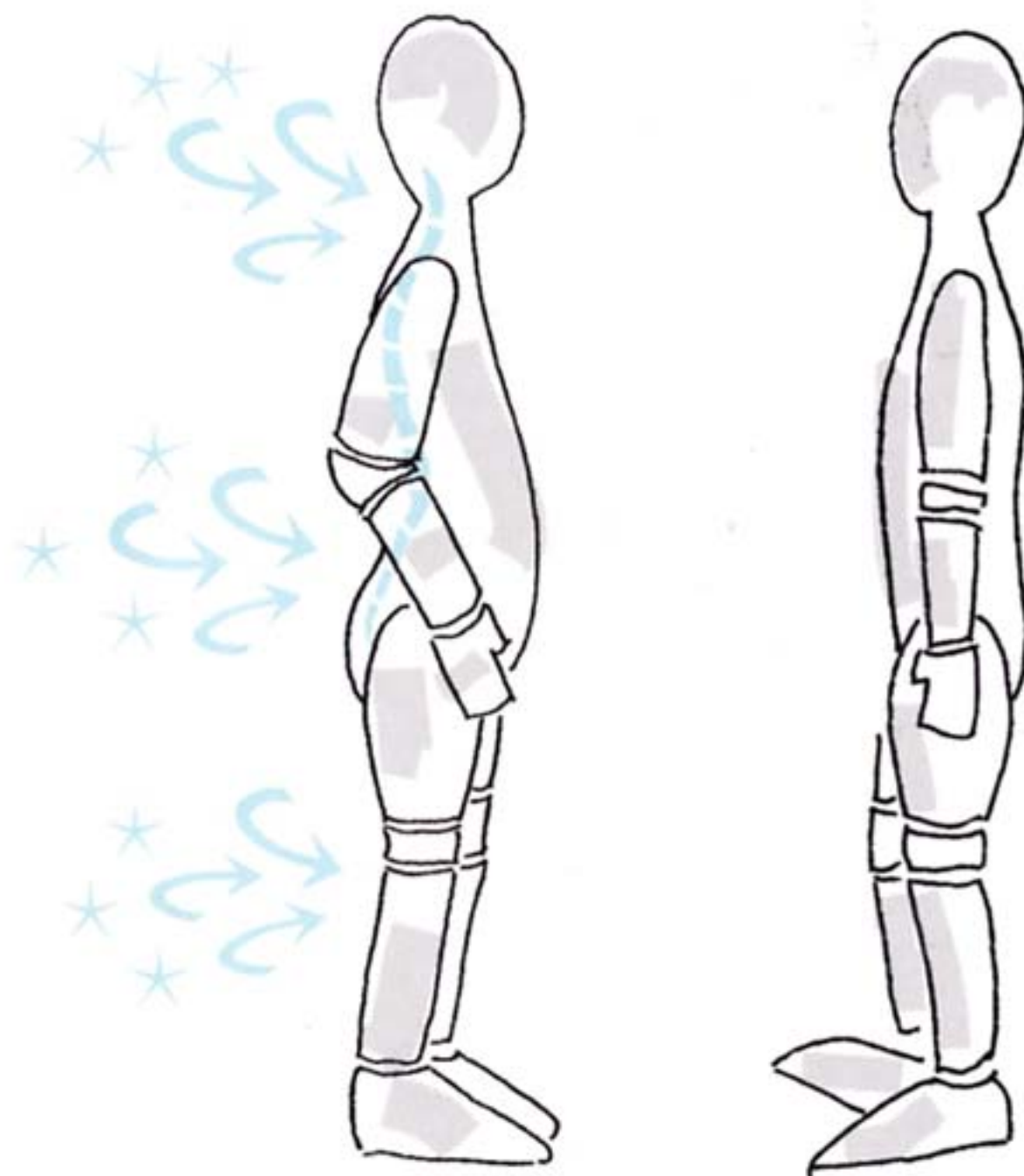


Good Back Care

The

Moving & Handling Of Loads

GUIDELINES FOR NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL EMPLOYEES



PERSONNEL DIRECTORATE

Good Back Care

The

Moving & Handling Of Loads

GUIDELINES FOR NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

INTRODUCTION

The back is in use 24 hours a day and it is not surprising that approximately 80% of the population will suffer back pain at some point. Sadly, 40% will continue to suffer. This may lead to more complicated problems in later life.

The guidelines shown in this booklet should be followed with care as all corrections to posture, methods of handling and exercise can themselves lead to problems if not handled correctly. This short guide aims to provide you with basic information which complements the programme of back care courses.

Posture

Perfect posture is not easy to define as each individual has different characteristics which must be taken into account, so only general guidance can be given here.

The ideal is to achieve a position of equilibrium where the skeletal structure can achieve a balanced position with least muscular effort and soft tissue damage ie. minimum effort for maximum function. There should be no tension, as tension leads to a position that cannot be sustained.

SEATED POSTURE

- Hip roll your bottom to the back of the seat
- To allow the natural curves of the spine to be maintained, soften the spine and lead away with the head so you sit tall
- Gently elevate the shoulders and then roll them back so the tension in your back muscles is removed
- Allow the hands to rest comfortably on the thighs
- Both feet should rest comfortably on the floor with legs uncrossed as this prevents twisting and varicose veins
- If there is insufficient support, use a lumbar roll, small cushion or a rolled up towel to support the lower back



Sitting with a 'C shape' curve to the back puts a great deal of pressure on the spine. Be kind to yourself and practise good sitting postures at all times.

This is especially true after a heavy day's work - don't automatically blame the work... it may be your posture when you have relaxed.

STANDING POSTURE

The human body is designed for movement and any static posture is maintained by the body performing a balancing act.

Many people are unable to stand for long periods as it provokes back pain. Here are some thoughts on how to reduce the pressure on the spine and tension in the surrounding muscle structures.



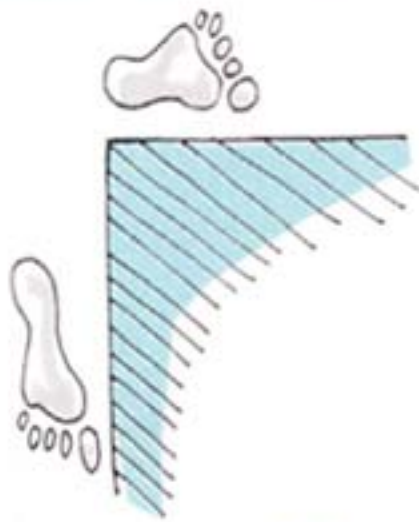
- Start with both feet parallel
- Open feet to hip width, keeping them directly under the hip joint
- Advance the lead foot, release tension in the knees as this will enable you to turn the back foot out for support
- Soften the spine and lead away with the head to stand tall
- Gently elevate the shoulders and roll them back so they are relaxed
- Place hands either in front or behind your back



Remember to keep the knees soft and your weight distributed equally over both feet. Gently shift the weight from one foot to the other from time to time.

Principles Of Good Moving

Stop and think! It only takes a few seconds but can save years of pain and suffering.



- Sort out your feet position
 - lead foot pointing in the direction of travel, relax down to the load
 - soften the spine to let gravity unlock the knees
- Organise your hands
 - remember leading hand and foot on the same side of the body as this prevents twisting of the spine
 - use a palmar hold

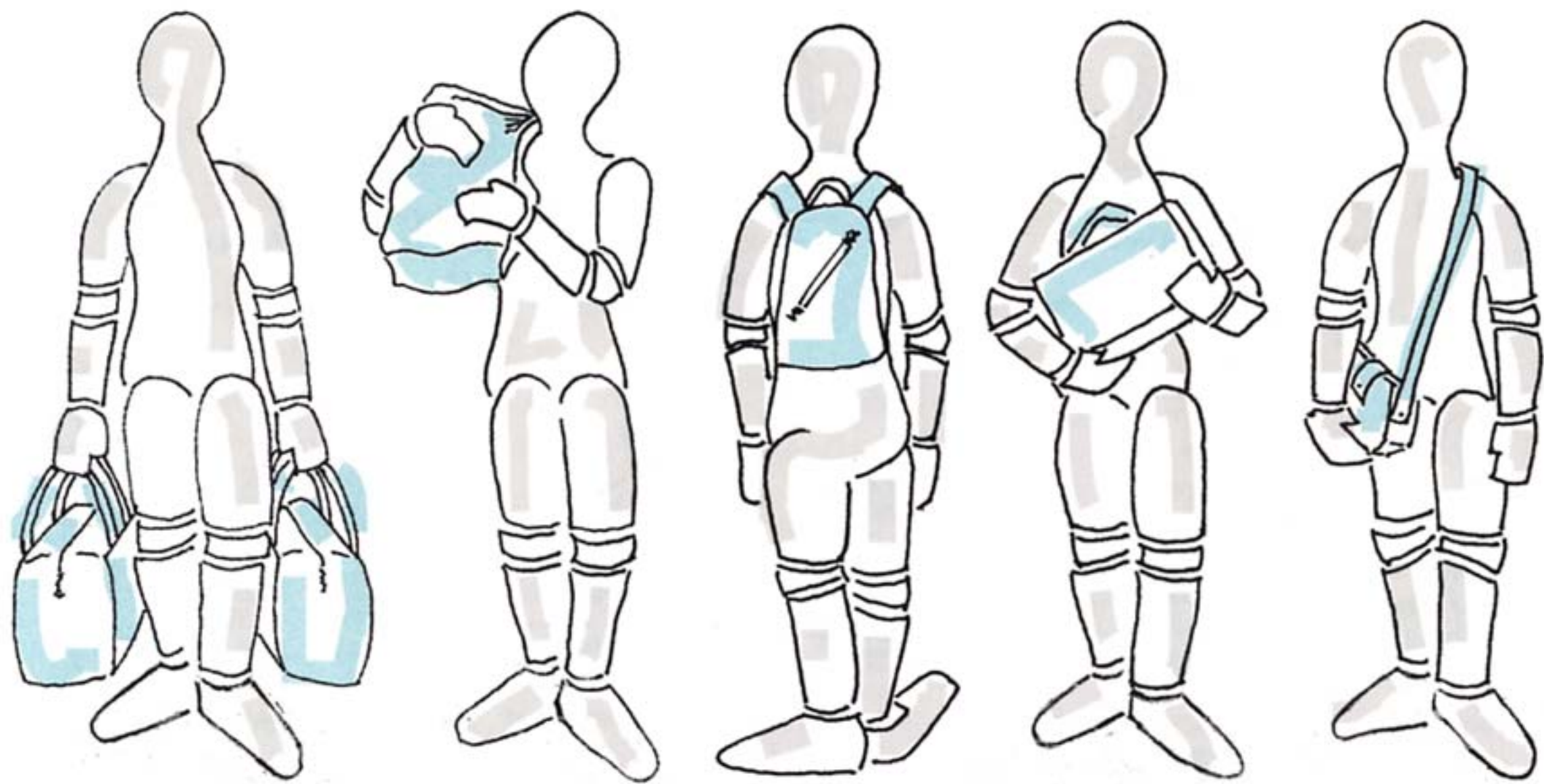


- Keep the load as close to your centre of gravity as possible
- Soften the spine and lead with your head
 - this brings the spine upright maintaining its natural S shape
 - where the head leads the back will follow
- Power up with the legs
 - this makes use of the powerful thigh muscles
- Keep the load close to the body
 - this reduces the stress felt by the muscles
 - the load even feels lighter!
- Other points to remember:
 - keep elbows close to the body
 - shorten the shoulder so your arms don't stretch out of the shoulder socket
 - hand position: palm grip, over and under grip
 - breathing: breathe in at the start of the lift and remember to breathe out!



ONCE ON THE MOVE

- balanced load
- carrying on the shoulder
- rucksack
- in the arms
- handbags



THE PRINCIPLES APPLIED IN DIFFERENT WAYS



- -let gravity do the work
- -use your legs not your back
- -point your lead foot at the post



- -keep the load close to the body



- -tuck your chin in
- -bend your knees/ not your back
- -place the lead foot under the bench



- -use the corners closest to you



- -stand up and the sack comes with you



- -take a firm hold



- -use momentum from the legs
- -don't recompress the spine to adjust sack position





- -kneel down
- -don't overfill the washing basket



- -the golfers lift
- -only appropriate for light weights



- -keep your head outside the car
- -place the load down then if necessary adjust it's position



- -drive from the legs not your back



- -stand close
- -keep your elbows in



- -slide the load as close to you as possible
- -use your legs to raise the load to boot edge
- -re-adjust your grip

Risk Assessment

Before you move anything stop and think! Carry out for yourself a quick assessment of what you are going to do, regardless of whether a formal risk assessment has been done or not.

CONSIDER:-

Task

why are you moving it?
do you need to?
where is it going?
how will you move it - team lift or mechanical assistance?

Individual

are you fit?
are you dressed appropriately?
are you using the correct technique?

Load

how heavy is it?
where is the centre of gravity?
is it stable, or sharp or hot or cold?

Environment

are there any space constraints?
what terrain are you moving over and have you got the right footwear?
does the weather make a difference?

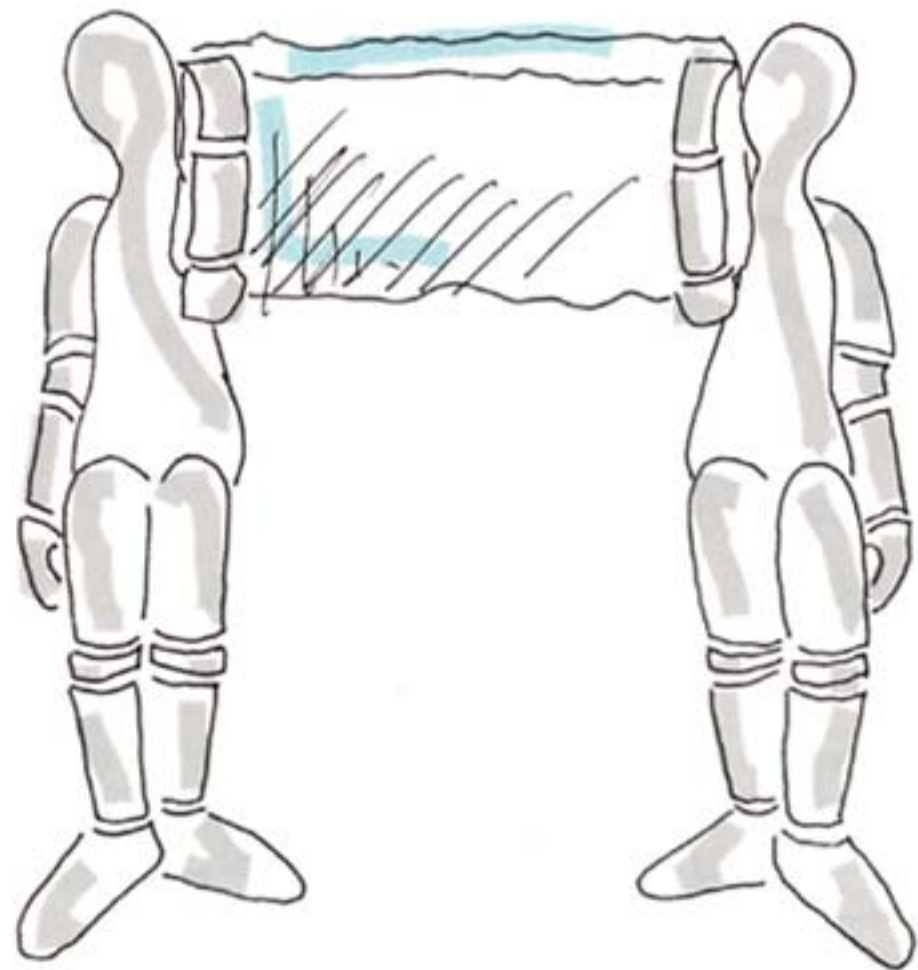
***IF IN DOUBT DO NOT MOVE IT
YOURSELF.....SEEK ASSISTANCE***

Team Lifting

Team lifts are a useful alternative to one person lifts where there are no mechanical aids, the load is too big or heavy or the environment is unsuitable.

Where there is more than one person involved, the risk of injury goes up so:-

- Assess the load
- Plan the movement
- Decide who will give the orders
- Check that all of the team is ready before starting the movement
- Instructions must be clear and incisive
eg Ready, Steady, Go or Ready, Heads, Go
- Remember the putting down needs just as much organisation as the lift!



Postures That Injure

Certain postures cause stress on the spine which can lead to injury. Intervertebral discs, muscle and ligament tears and slipped facet joints are some of the common ones.

HERE ARE SOME POSTURES THAT YOU SHOULD AVOID:-

- Top heavy bending
- Holding a load at a distance from the trunk
- Stretching - above shoulder height, into boxes
- Twisting - seated and stooped
- Reaching
- Poor posture



Condemned Lifts

These lifts have been banned for a number of years.

These lifts can result in serious injuries to the carer and client. The carer is forced to adopt top heavy bending or a twisted posture.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE:

- Lifting with arms around the neck



- Drag lift



- Orthodox or cradle



Condemned Lifts Continued

The list of banned lifts is being extended.



● Australian or Shoulder Lift



● Through arm lift



● Rocking pivot transfer

***SAFER ALTERNATIVE SLIDING
TECHNIQUES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED***

Exercise For Good Back Care

It is extremely important that if you suffer a back injury or any other musculo-skeletal injury that you consult your Doctor immediately for treatment and advice.

Back pain experts now agree that exercise may assist back pain sufferers. Movement is necessary for the maintenance of a healthy spine. Regular exercise will ensure that the joints remain mobile and strengthen muscles.

If you have a back problem, or have ever had one in the past it is important to ensure your spine is as mobile as possible and supported by strong muscles.

The following exercises carried out regularly can help to improve spinal mobility and strengthen the muscles used to control the movement and posture of the spine.

Exercise should not be undertaken without first consulting your GP, OSTEOPATH, PHYSIOTHERAPIST or CHIROPRACTOR, and any exercise which causes pain either during the exercise or continues after the exercise, should be stopped immediately and advice regarding alternative exercise sought.

It is vital that we exercise safely, starting off gently and progressing steadily. You should not rush into exercise, particularly strenuous physical activity, as this may result in further damage or injury.

NOT ALL EXERCISE WILL SUIT YOUR PARTICULAR PROBLEM. YOU SHOULD SELECT ONLY THOSE WHICH YOU FEEL ARE OF BENEFIT TO YOU.

LET'S BEGIN THE EXERCISES BY:-

STARTING POSITION:

Lying on the floor, on your back. Draw up both knees so that the feet are flat on the floor with your heels close to the buttocks. Place your hands palm down flat on the floor by your side.

BACK RELAXATION (Initial stage)

- Lie on the floor, in the starting position.
- Slowly walk your heels as close to your buttocks as possible.
- Allow your back muscles to relax.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles to help reduce any excessive curve in your lower back.
- As you relax your back muscles the size of the hollow should reduce.
- Lie still and relax for several minutes.



BACK RELAXATION (Advanced stage)

- Allow the right knee to relax towards the side.
- Rotate the foot outwards, push heel along the floor to extend the leg.
- Repeat movement with the left leg.
- Check the size of the hollow has reduced.

If the hollow has increased the back muscles are not sufficiently relaxed. Repeat the initial stage of the exercise.

PELVIC TILT (Abdominal strengthening)

- Lie on the floor, in the starting position.
- Lower the hollow of your back to the floor.
- Tighten the abdominal muscles and the muscles of the buttocks.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds then relax.
- Repeat this three times.



KNEE PULLS - SINGLE

(Mobilises hip and stretches buttock muscle)

- Lie on the floor in the starting position.
- Draw up the right knee towards the chest.
- Place your right hand on the front of the knee.
- Continue to draw the knee towards the chest as far as you can.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Release the knee slowly and return the foot to the floor.

- Repeat this three times.
- Remember to keep your back firmly on the floor.



KNEE PULLS - DOUBLE

- Lie on the floor in the starting position.
- Draw both knees towards the chest.
- Place your hands on the front of the knees.
- Continue to draw the knees towards the chest as far as possible.

- Do not pull too far as this will produce curling of the spine.
- Hold position for 5 seconds.
- Release knees slowly and return feet to the floor.
- Remember to keep your back firmly on the floor.

KNEE ROLLS

(Mobilising spine and stretching abdominals)

- Lie on the floor in the starting position.
- Put your arms out to the side, palms down.
- Keep your feet and knees together.
- Allow both knees to slowly drop to the right side towards the floor.
- Hold the position for 5 seconds.
- Return knees to the upright position.
- Repeat this three times.
- Repeat the exercise moving the knees to the left side.



Remember it is not necessary to touch the floor with the outside of the knees. Progress the movement only as far as you can without discomfort.

BRIDGING TECHNIQUE

(Mobilises hips and strengthens abdominal)

- Lie on the floor as in the first exercise.
- Put your arms out to the side, palms down.
- Keep your head and shoulders on the floor.
- Raise your buttocks as high as you can from the floor.
- Hold for 5 seconds.
- Then lower them down again.
- Repeat this three times.



MOUNTAIN AND SAG (Mobilises spine)

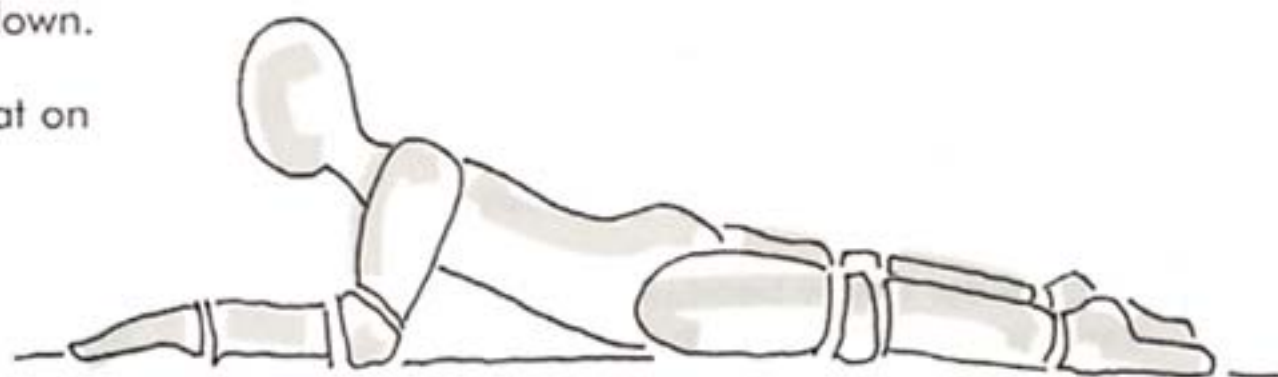
- From the basic position on the floor turn over onto your hands and knees.
- Fingers and hands pointing forwards.
- Hunch your back like a cat.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Gradually let your back sag down, allow elbows to flex.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Repeat this three times.



EXTENSION IN LYING (Initial stage)

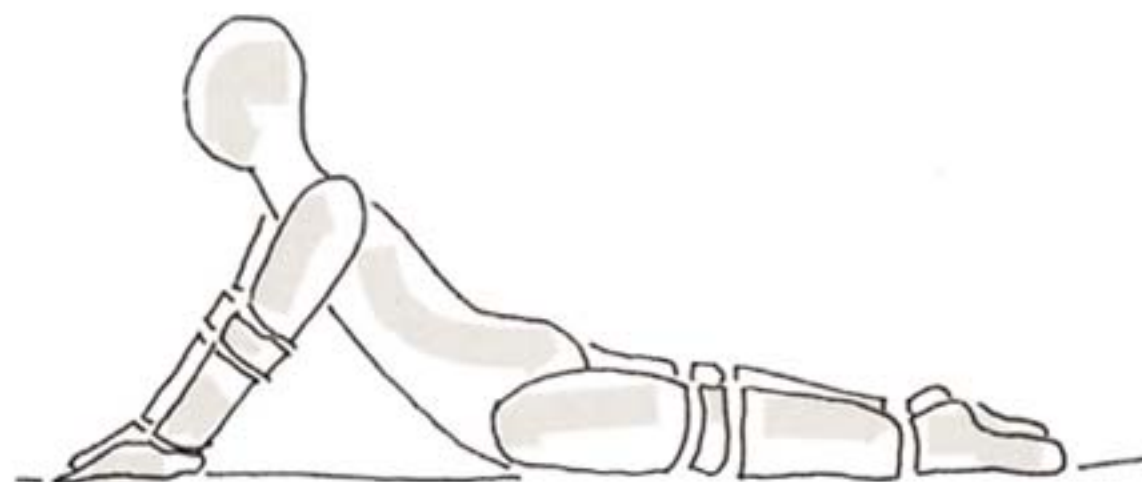
Mobilises spine

- From the basic position, turn over to lie face down.
- Place elbows under the shoulders, forearms flat on the floor so the back makes a gentle arch.
- Keep the hips flat on the floor.
- Hold position for 5 seconds.
- Relax down to the floor.
- Repeat three times.



(Advanced stage)

- Place your hands flat on the floor under the shoulders, as if to do press ups.
- Breathe in.
- Push up with your arms, keeping both hips pressed to the floor.
- Lift as high as you can, lower down and breathe out.
- Repeat this three times.



EXTENSION IN STANDING

- Stand upright, place the feet hip width apart facing forwards.
- Place your hands on the small of the back, breathe in, unlock the knees.
- Breathe out slowly bending backwards and supporting the back with the hands.
- Hold this position for 5 seconds.
- Return to the upright position.
- Repeat this three times.



WALL/BACK SLIDE

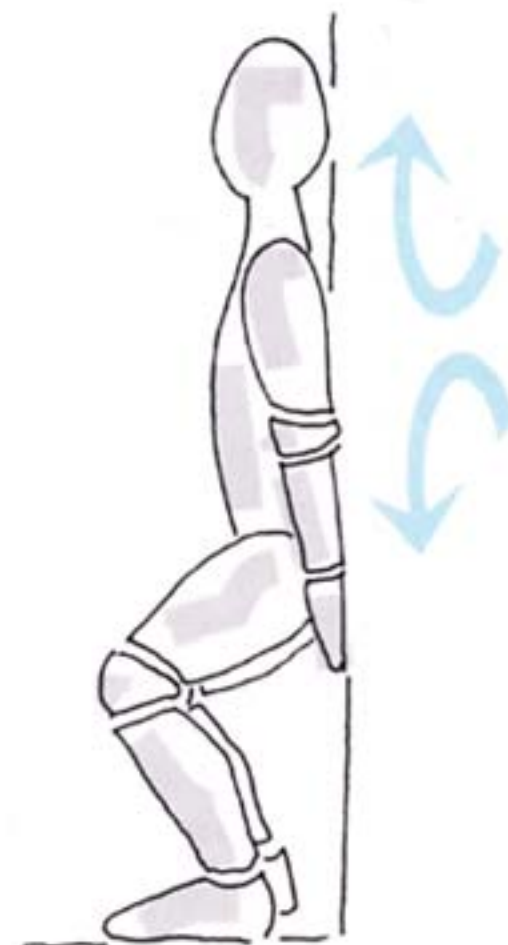
Strengthening thigh/leg muscles

By doing this exercise it will help you to take the strain off your back when you perform activities such as lifting, as your leg muscles will be strengthened.

- Stand with your back against the wall.
- Feet in the base movement.
- Slowly slide down the wall till your bottom is in line with your knees.
- Slide back up the wall to the starting position.

At first you may find it difficult to slide down the wall far enough so that your buttocks are in line with your knees.

Slide down only as far as you can, to allow you to return to the starting position.



With all of these exercises move only to the point of pain (this is your safe range of movement) and NOT beyond it. STOP IF PAIN CONTINUES

- *Our backs are an integral part of our ability to move and they need to be looked after so that they last us a lifetime.*
- *We each need to be responsible for our own health and the information outlined in this guide is here to help you to exchange your bad habits for better ones.*
- *To this end there are a number of in house courses to assist you and of course there is the Occupational Health Team who can offer specialist advice.*

***LOOK AFTER YOUR BACK AND IT
WILL LAST YOU A LIFE TIME***

©Personnel Directorate

NORTHUMBERLAND
COUNTY COUNCIL