



## SELF-HELP: PATIENT'S ADVICE

# How to stabilize my back<sup>☆</sup>

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The modern approach to caring for your back involves simple, safe, effective exercises to nourish and condition the trunk muscles. The latest research tells us that exercise speeds recovery and can even minimize the severity of future episodes of back pain. Mild pain may be experienced at first, but this usually goes away quickly. The best exercises for the back focus on endurance rather than strength. This is good news since such exercises require far less load. However, it is important that they are performed slowly with excellent form. It is said "practice doesn't make perfect it makes permanent".

**Bracing:** For each of these "safe back" exercises, practice bracing your back by tightening your abdominal muscles as if you were being tickled or as if someone was trying to push you and you wanted to remain still. Be sure NOT to hold your breath at the same time.

## Side bridge

### Procedure

Begin on your knees, feet, and forearms.

Your hips and knees should be bent slightly.

Lift your lower hip up a little so that your spine is not sagging towards the floor. Brace your spine.

Then raise your hips up and forward until your body is in a plank position—from your knees to hips and shoulders (Figs. 1–3).

## Troubleshooting

If this is hard to perform then you can place your other hand on the floor to help push up with. If you

feel pain in your shoulder grasp your shoulder with your hand and pull it firmly down.

Repetitions: 8–10 slowly with 2 breath holds in the elevated position

Frequency: twice a day

## Advanced side bridge

### Procedure

Lie on your side supported by your crossed feet and forearm.

Lift your lower hip up a little so that your spine is not sagging towards the floor. Brace your spine.

Then raise your hips and knees up until your body is in a straight line (side plank) lifted off the floor (see Fig. 4).

After holding for 2 breaths roll onto both forearms (front plank), without twisting your torso (keep your pelvis and rib cage in fixed alignment) (see Fig. 5).

Hold in this position for 2 breaths. Finally roll onto your other forearm (side plank) (see Fig. 6).

## Troubleshooting

When you roll if your torso twists (shoulder moves more than hips) try to move them as a unit. If you feel pain in your shoulder grasp your shoulder with your hand and pull it firmly down during the side plank position (Figs. 7 and 8).

Repetitions: 8–10 slowly with 2 breath holds in each elevated position

Frequency: twice a day

<sup>☆</sup>This paper may be photocopied for educational use.

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Figure 1 Side bridge on knees—uncorrected rest position.



Figure 2 Side bridge on knees—ready position.



Figure 3 Side bridge on knees—elevated position.



Figure 4 Advanced side bridge on ankles—initial side plank position.

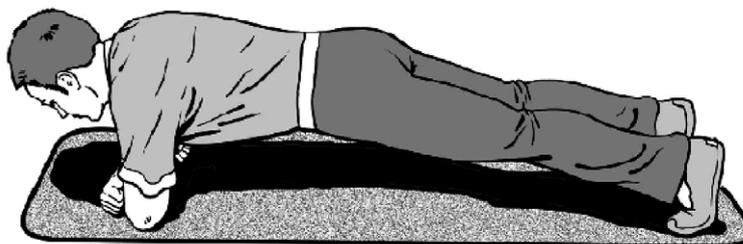


Figure 5 Advanced side bridge on ankles—middle anterior plank position.

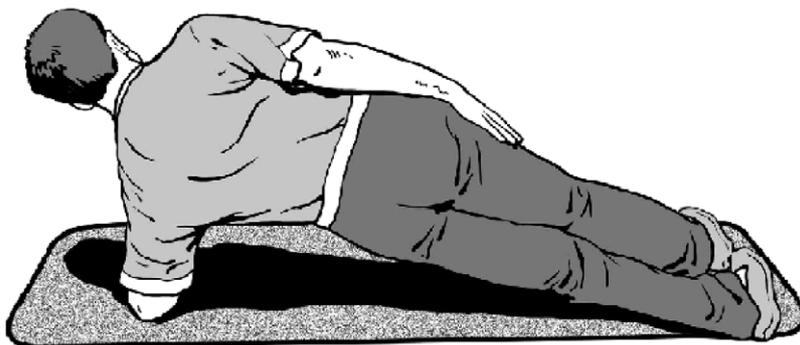


Figure 6 Advanced side bridge on ankles—final side plank position.



Figure 7 Trunk rolling—correct.



Figure 8 Trunk rolling—incorrect.