

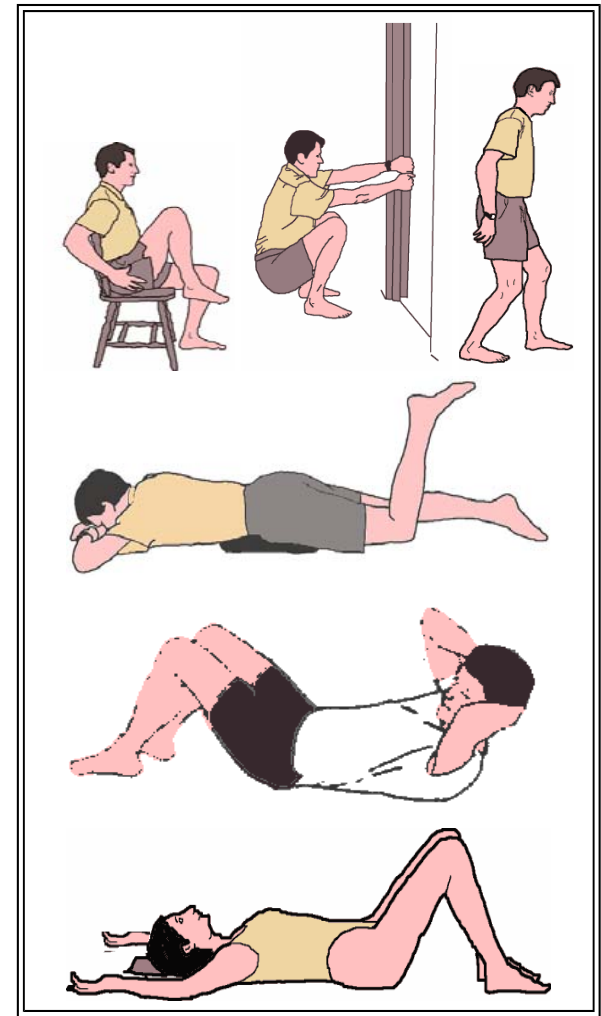
The Back Maintenance Manual (1): Pilates Exercises for Low Back Pain

(Sample 6 of 6 free Samples)

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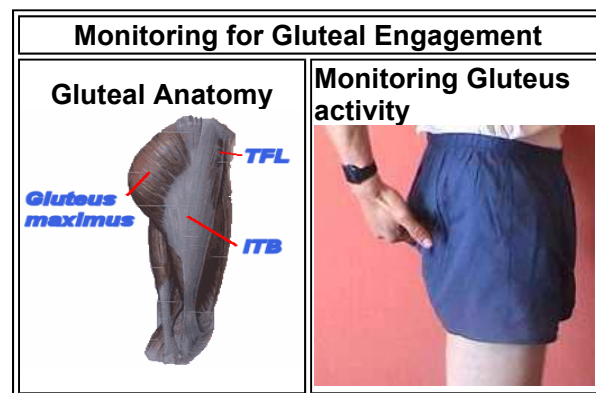


(1) Engage Gluteus maximus while Standing, Start Position:-

1. Stand upright and relaxed with your feet hip width apart and your toes pointing slightly outwards and unlock your knees.
2. Your pelvis should be in "neutral".
3. Gently zip and hollow your lower abdomen.

Action:-

1. Tense your gluteals, & hold for 3 seconds - you can check that the Gluteus maximus has engaged by placing a hand over the relevant area (see picture below) - repeat 3-5 times.



(2) Engage Gluteus maximus while Walking- (1) At "Heel Strike":-

1. Stand as for "Engage Gluteus maximus while Standing".
2. Start walking: Each time your foot lands, engage your Gluteus maximus on that side.

(2) While "Walking on sharp Pebbles":-

1. Make sure that you are in bare feet, and imagine that you are walking on sharp, painful pebbles! You should find that -
 - o Your foot lands very gently!
 - o Heel and toe land at the same time, and with equal weighting!
2. Pause just after your foot has landed and at the moment that you are standing on one foot, and take note whether your Gluteus maximus is engaging! - (2-4 minutes is a good workout).

(3) Engage Gluteus maximus while bare Foot Running on Tar Seal:-

(Not for the faint hearted!) Engage the Gluteus maximus as the foot touches the ground, and land your foot quietly, with the knees and hips bending a little more than you are used to. Your knees should not collapse inwards: The kneecap looks straight over the second toe of your foot. (Small doses only)!

You are beginning to move like a Kalahari bushman! - see reference (1).



Comment (1) - Gluteus maximus Contraction Stabilizes the body from the mid back downwards:-

It takes rough surface walking to "trigger" the latent stabilizing power of the Gluteus. With "Walking on Sharp Pebbles", you will have noticed that your Gluteus maximus naturally tended to engage, your knees tended not to collapse inwards, and your foot arches found it easy to form just as they are supposed to. Modern shoeing and smooth sidewalks have taken away this natural "buttocks firming" stimulus. Worse still, the "lazy Gluteus" becomes even lazier when the back is sore or the ankle is sprained(17). The laziness of this lower back & hip stabilizer is a disaster for modern musculo-skeletal health(1,12). Hence the need for Gluteus maximus walking workouts & exercises!

Comment (2) - Buttocks firming is definitely part of the traditional Pilates workout! -

Listen to Mari Winsor in her phenomenally successful Pilates Video Series ('Sculpt your Body Slim') as she describes the Roll Up: "Squeeze your tush and engage your power house!"

Comment (3): The Gluteus maximus is a dynamic stabilizer! -

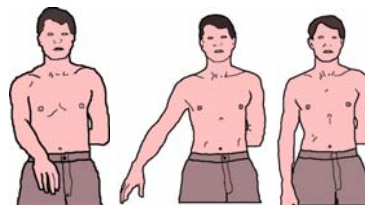
Only engage the Gluteus maximus at heel strike, when squatting, bending forward or climbing stairs! Keep it relaxed at all other times.

(Attention: does not replace the advice of a medical specialist - Refer "Back Pain Red Flags", page 55).

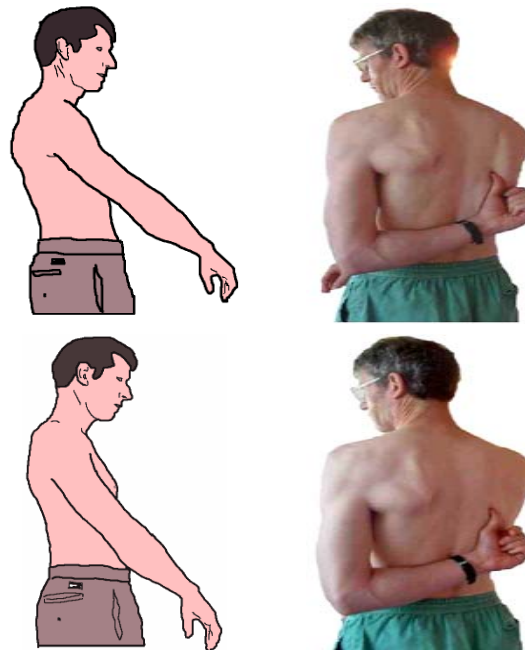
The Scapular Anchor:- Start Position

1. Stand relaxed and point with your arm at a spot on the floor about one meter in front of your feet.
2. While relaxing your right shoulder, let your arm elongate toward the spot on the floor.
3. Reach your left hand up behind your back and touch the lower left corner of your right shoulder blade. It should be easy to find because it will be sticking out from your back (this is called scapular winging).

The Scapular Anchor in Pictures:- Start Position and Action



Pictures: Top Row - Scapular winging of right shoulder: the corner of the scapular has lifted away from the underlying ribs. Bottom row - Scapular winging corrected.



Comment: Management of Scapular Winging

Works the "Scapular Anchors": The Lower Trapezius & the Serratus anterior. These muscles are often weak, causing the shoulder blade to be poorly positioned. Poor shoulder blade positioning contributes to muscle strains & rotator cuff injuries(13). Use your scapular anchors throughout the day! - Your shoulder muscles will perform better, & you will save yourself a lot of pain!.

Pictures: Left - The lower trapezius. Right - The Serratus anterior (viewed from the front).



The Scapular Anchor:- Action

1. While continuing to point at the spot on the floor, attempt to bring the lower left corner of your shoulder blade back close to your back. You will have to work hard to do this.
2. Point at a spot on the floor 45 degrees to the right of your feet, and hold the lower left point of your shoulder blade close to your back. Use the least amount of muscle tension that will do this.
3. Bring your right arm back down to your side, & hold the lower left point of your shoulder blade close to your back. Use the least amount of muscle tension that will do this. This should take very little effort.
4. As a final check, use your left hand to check that your right Latissimus dorsi is relaxed (see diagram far right).

Pictures: Left - The Latissimus dorsi. Right - How to locate the Latissimus dorsi.



Comment

"Posture experts" tell you to put your shoulders "back" or "down". This doesn't work as a postural instruction because it actually increases tension in many muscles beyond what is necessary: For example, try the standard Pilates advice to "keep the shoulder blades down on your back" while running. You will finish your run with very sore shoulder muscles!

The Neck Roll and Chin Tuck:- Start Position

1. Lie in the relaxation position, knees bent and arm resting on lower abdomen.
2. Gently anchor the scapulas.
3. You may use a thin pillow under your head, but try not to.

The Neck Roll and Chin Tuck:- Action

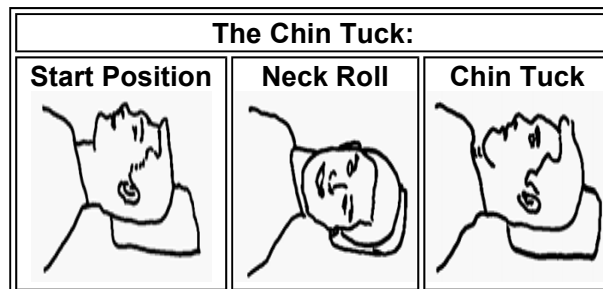
First relax and free up your neck:

1. Place the "Buddha" or "Mona Lisa" smile on your face, let your tongue widen at its base and your neck gently lengthen at the back.
2. Let your shoulder blades melt into the floor. A couple of slow deep breaths will aid this.
3. Now slowly roll your head. First to the right, then slowly to the left.
4. Repeat a few times.

Once your neck is free:

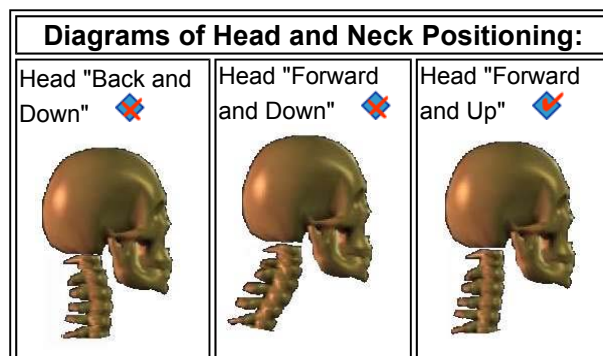
1. Bring your head to the centre.
2. Tuck your chin in. Keep your head on the floor and let the back of your neck lengthen. Imagine you are holding a ripe peach under your chin. This is a small, relaxed and subtle movement.

Neck pain can be a problem when performing the Pilates One Hundred and other Pilates Exercises. See right panel for further comment...



Comment: Take a side view look at yourself!-

- **Diagram left:** a tucked chin, but the back of the neck is shortened - typical of the "pompous lawyer".
- **Diagram Middle:** a relaxed chin and head projected forward - typical of the hump backed "dowager widow".
- **Diagram right:** a gently tucked chin with neck lengthening upwards. This is the ideal **"strong middle positioning"** of head and neck! Less than 10% of people achieve this(47,48).



Neck Pain and Pilates...

Don't be discouraged. Pilates is wonderful for finding weaknesses, and even sports pro's find Pilates difficult to start with.

Three suggestions:-

(1) During the moves that cause neck pain, keep your head resting on the floor. Preferably use a pillow.

(2) During class, gently work the sore neck by doing the neck roll. (diagram in mid panel).

(3) During your day, avoid "head forward and down". E.g. if bringing a soup spoon to your mouth, bend at your hips to let your whole torso come forward, and lengthen your neck. These suggestions elongate and take pressure off the sternocleidomastoid muscle, which is a weak muscle that Pilates seeks to strengthen.

Further Reading:-

- Refer:- 12, 47, 48

(Attention: does not replace the advice of a medical specialist - Refer "Back Pain Red Flags", page 55).

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Diagram 1: The modified Pilates 100 - when your neck hurts, keep your head on the floor. Preferably use a pillow.



Diagram 2: Don't lift your head this way... ❌



Diagram 3: The safe head lift with chin tuck... ✅

