



Andrew M Cash, MD, Orthopedic Spine Surgeon
DISC-Desert Institute of Spine Care
State of the Art Non-Operative & Operative
Treatments of the Neck & Back

LOW-IMPACT EXERCISE FOR BACK PAIN

Along with specific back exercises recommend by your physical therapist , chiropractor or physical trainer, aerobic exercise that increases the heart rate for a sustained period might be beneficial for helping back problems.

Aerobic exercise increases the flow of blood and nutrients which supports healing, and can decrease the stiffness in the back and joints that lead to back pain. While some patients with back pain are able to participate in vigorous exercise like running or step aerobics, others find it easier to engage in low-impact exercise, for example walking, which does not jar the spine.

BENEFITS OF AEROBIC EXERCISE

Reconditioning through aerobic exercise is very useful for both rehabilitation and maintenance of the lower back. Patients who regularly undertake aerobic exercise to condition the back will benefit in several ways:

- They might have fewer episodes of low back pain, and will experience less pain when an episode occurs.
- They might stay more functional (e.g. continue working and carry on with recreational activities). Those patients with chronic low back pain who do not engage in aerobic exercise might experience gradual

- loss of functional capabilities.
- Useful to control weight or lose weight, decreasing the stress placed on the spine structures and joints.
- An increased production of endorphins after 30 or 40 minutes of exercise can combat pain. These biochemicals are the body's natural pain-killer, and frequent release of them can help patients reduce their reliance on pain medication.
- Endorphins can elevate mood and relieve symptoms of depression, a condition common in those with back pain or a back injury.

TYPES OF LOW-IMPACT EXERCISE

There are several types of aerobic exercise that are gentle on the back and, when done on a regular basis, can be highly effective in providing conditioning.

- Walking. In general, walking for exercise is very gentle on the back, and walking two to three miles three times per week is very helpful for patients.
- Stationary bicycling. For those patients who are more comfortable seated rather than standing, biking or stationary biking may be preferable.
- Elliptical trainer or step machine. These machines provide a low-impact workout because the pedal is suspended above the ground to move in a continuous oval motion, as opposed to continuously stepping on a hard surface.
- Water therapy. Doing exercise in the water provides for effective conditioning while minimizing stress on the back because the buoyancy of water counteracts the gravitational pull that can compress the spine.



When your back is hurting, don't wait for the pain to go away on its own. Make an appointment with Dr Andrew Cash at the Desert Institute of Spine Care (DISC). Dr Cash can examine your back, diagnose the source of your pain, and get you on the road to feeling your best again.

Andrew M Cash, MD is a board-certified and fellowship-trained orthopedic spine surgeon who began practice in Las Vegas in 2006. Dr. Cash is the founder and director of the Desert Institute of Spine Care and the Minimally Invasive Center of Excellence (MICOE). He studied under Dr. Robert Watkins, a world-renowned spine surgeon who operated on countless professional, collegiate and Olympic athletes. Prior to his Spine Fellowship, Dr. Cash completed a five-year orthopedic surgery residency at the Atlanta Medical Center and received his medical degree from the prestigious University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.