

## Exercise and Movement are Essential for Healing Back Pain

A widespread misunderstanding among patients dealing with intractable back pain is that exercise should be avoided at all costs. This is understandable as many patients are reluctant to exercise fearing that any exercises, stretching, or activity will aggravate their existing back pain and make matters that much worse. While this approach is logical and may even be recommended in the short term, when this is done for more than a day or two it can actually damage the healing process. The concern is that patients rely solely on medical modalities and minimize the significance of exercise for healing, stability, and long-term back pain relief.

For most spine-related problems, exercise and movement are essential for the healing process. We often find that slow, controlled and progressive activity is much more beneficial in providing the best long-term solution for reducing back pain and preventing or decreasing future episodes of pain.

Exercise and fitness play a dual role of both treating back pain and helping to prevent back pain flare-ups. They help to ease existing back problems by a myriad of mechanisms; the main one being that movement and exercise keep the anatomy of the back healthy which help to reduce the chances of worsening injury and back pain.

At St. Luke's Hospital Pain Center we will first help consult with patients before they begin any exercise or fitness program and incorporate a team approach while working with multiple specialties including physical and occupational therapy. Working with Pain Management specialists will ensure that patients' activities and regimens are safe for their back and for their overall health. With back pain, it's particularly important to get an accurate diagnosis for the cause of the patient's pain from a physician in order to rule out possible types of back pain that may be aggravated by exercise such as spinal instability.

Exercise and fitness are essential in our everyday lives to promote physical and mental well-being. Most believe that a regimen should be multifaceted including time for meditation as well as changing dietary habits, which I concur with. These programs should not be too complicated as they will be used during most phases of the treatment for pain and to improve the overall health of patients.

*Javid Baksh, DO, Medical Director- St. Luke's Hospital Pain Center, is seeing patients in a temporary location at St. Luke's Hospital until renovations to his office building at 48 Hospital Drive, Suite 2A are completed. He is accepting new patients; referrals from a primary care provider are necessary. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 828-894-0975. Referrals can be faxed to 828-894-0982.*

*Polk Fit, Fresh and Friendly (PF3) is a group of 80+ community members, leaders and health professionals, all working together to plan and implement effective strategies to promote wellness in our community. We welcome any individual who is interested in joining us to make our community a healthier place for all. For more information and a list of our meeting dates, please visit our website at [www.polkfitfreshandfriendly.org](http://www.polkfitfreshandfriendly.org).*