

To Improve the Endurance Capabilities of the “Core” Musculature

The following low back pain exercise is very simple, and when practiced and performed daily can help to build a more injury resilient spine, and therefore keep you functioning at your best!

An example of the Bird Dog Stretch

Bird Dog

This exercise has a funny name and can be difficult to perform properly. However, it can still be scaled back if it is too difficult. The purpose of the Bird dog exercise is to improve the endurance capabilities of the “core” musculature, that is the muscles deep to the spine and in the abdomen. These muscles deep to the spine tend to switch off after prolonged sitting or poor movements. To perform this exercise:

- Get on the floor with your knees under your hips and your hands shoulder width apart.
- Always keep the spine neutral and the pelvis level to the shoulders. The easiest way to find neutral is arch the low back up as far as you can and then down as far as you can and find the middle.
- Maintain a firm abdominal brace before starting to initiate movement of the arms or legs. This should feel as though you are blowing up a balloon or preparing to be punched in the stomach.
- While keeping the abdominal brace, slowly move one arm out in front of you while moving the opposite leg away from you. Make sure not to allow the body to twist or tilt at all.
- Keep the arm and leg in the extended position for a second or two, and then slowly bring the arm and leg back to neutral.

The above steps are one repetition, and this exercise is best performed with 12-20 repetitions on each side, done for three sets. However, as this exercise’s aim is to improve endurance, it is important that you do not feel too fatigued after each set. If you feel you can’t complete 12 repetitions on each side without shaking and falling over, make the exercise easier. This can be done by only moving your legs, keeping your arms stationary. This will allow you to improve the endurance of the muscles we are targeting without getting too fatigued and using other muscles instead of the ones we are trying to train.



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Progressions

If this exercise is too easy for you then perform a harder variation. This exercise can be made harder by starting with your hands and knees closer to each other. This narrows your balance base, which makes you work harder on keeping your pelvis balanced and therefore works the muscles in a more extreme way.

To make it even harder, while your arm and leg are in the extended position, try to draw a square with your arm and an inverse square with your leg, such that when you move up with your arm, you move down with your leg and vice versa. This will really challenge your ability to maintain a neutral pelvis and spine position. After doing 3 sets of 15 repetitions of this on both sides, you can count yourself an expert on the bird dog exercise.

Any problems or questions about this exercise and contact your chiropractor on [01323 722 499](tel:01323722499).

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