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EVIDENCE-BASED EXERCISES  
FOR BRAIN AND BODY

## INTERMEDIATE PILATES FOR UPPER BACK EXTENSION (EQUIPMENT)

*This series of exercises focuses on upper back extension to relieve tension in the back and shoulders and improve posture.*

### UPPER BACK EXTENSION (BOLSTER)

#### Step 1

Rest your mid to upper back on the bolster with your knees bent so that your feet are flat on the floor.

#### Step 2

Place your hands behind your head. Ensure you do not pull your head forward or place strain on your neck.

#### Step 4

Gently arch over the bolster using the muscles of your upper back.



#### Step 3

Draw your shoulder blades down your back.

#### Step 5

Slowly return your body to the step 2 position.

Repeat steps 3 to 5 ten times.

Did you know that the  
nerves that control  
posture are located  
within your brainstem?

## UPPER BACK EXTENSION (SWISS BALL)

### Step 1

Place a Swiss ball against a wall. Sit upright with your back against the Swiss ball and your knees bent so that your feet are flat on the floor.

### Step 2

Place your hands behind your head. Ensure you do not pull your head forward or place strain on your neck.



### Step 4

Gently arch over the Swiss ball using the muscles of your upper back. Do not arch through the lower back.



### Step 3

Draw your shoulder blades down your back.

### Step 5

Slowly return your body to the step 2 position.

Repeat steps 3 to 5 ten times.

Good posture requires adequate strength and endurance in the upper back extensor muscles.

Poor posture can shift your centre of gravity forwards affecting balance and increasing your risk of pain.

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## THE STICK LIFT

### Step 1

Sit upright with your back against a wall and your knees bent so that your feet are flat on the floor.

### Step 2

Holding a stick, raise your arms so that the stick is close to or touching the wall. Move your elbows inwards so that they are shoulder width apart.



### Step 4

Slowly move your hands towards the ceiling keeping the stick close to or touching the wall. Keep your elbows shoulder width apart. Keep your shoulders down. You should feel the muscles of your mid to upper back working.



### Step 3

Draw your shoulder blades down your back.

Exercises stimulate nerve cells in the posture centres of your brainstem.

### Step 5

Slowly return to the step 2 position.

Repeat steps 3 to 5 ten times.

## SWISS BALL SUPERMAN

### Step 1

Kneel in front of your Swiss ball and wrap your arms and chest around it. Move your body forward so that your legs end up straight and you are balancing on your toes.



### Step 2

Lift your trunk so that your body is straight and raise your arms above your head shoulder width apart.



### Step 3

Draw your shoulder blades down your back.



### Step 4

Slowly bend your elbows so that they move towards your sides. You should continue to draw your shoulder blades down your back. You should feel the muscles of your mid to upper back working. You should not feel discomfort in your lower back.

### Step 5

Slowly return your arms to the step 2 position.

Repeat steps 3 to 5 ten times.

When you learn new exercises you're not just changing your body – you're also changing your brain!

## PECS STRETCH BOLSTER

### Step 1

Lie on your back so that your body is supported by the bolster with your feet flat on the floor hip width apart.



### Step 2

Relax your arms onto the floor in a horizontal position. You should feel your chest and front of your shoulders stretch.

### Step 3

Breathe into your stomach allowing your rib cage to expand sideways. Try not to use your neck muscles or let your upper chest rise. Breathe out and relax.

Breathe and relax for 30 seconds.

## CHI BALL RELAXATION EXERCISE

### Step 1

Deflate the Chi Ball slightly to the desired amount.



### Step 2

Place the Chi Ball under your upper back and lie on it with your legs straight and head resting on a pillow.



### Step 3

Breathe into your stomach allowing your rib cage to expand sideways. Try not to use your neck muscles or let your upper chest rise. Breathe out and relax.

Breathe and relax for 30 seconds.