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Why Your Spine Deserves A Better Deal Than Your Shiny Bikes!

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In every Parsi colony, there's a scene we've all witnessed: a beloved vintage Royal Enfield or Yezdi, restored with more care than that ancestral gramophone no one dares play. Some of us take more pride in our vehicles than in our health, especially our spines. While the bikes get their oil changed, engines tuned and suspensions adjusted, our backs are left slouched, compressed and ignored... until one fine morning, they revolt! Suddenly, it's not as easy getting out of bed, climbing stairs or even bending to pick up something from the floor.

As an orthopaedic surgeon, I often meet patients who come in with lower back pain that's been "on and off" for years, now worsened to the point of interfering with sleep, work or mobility. And yet, for some reason, they waited until pain began radiating down the legs or they started fearing the MRI machine more than the pain itself. Guess it's time we gave our spine the same respect we reserve for our vintage bikes!

Your Spine: The Unsung Hero of Daily Life

The spine is a complex column of 33 vertebrae, intervertebral discs (acting like shock absorbers), muscles, ligaments, and nerves. It supports your head, anchors your limbs, and enables you to bend, twist, walk, sit, stand, and make the occasional run to the nearest beloved Irani cafe. It's built for mobility and strength. But, like any well-designed structure, it depends heavily on maintenance.

Most chronic back pains don't come from injury or trauma, but from neglect - poor posture, sedentary habits, weak muscles, bad ergonomics and improper lifting. Some common lifestyle triggers include those soft, sunken sofas that suck you in like a black hole; extended work hours during which you are slouched

on a chair against the laptop; Endless WhatsApp groups scrolling on the lazy chairs; Heavy lifting using wrong posture, and of course, the rich diet, which contributes to weight gain and reduced activity.

The Dangers of Inactivity: Our ancestors walked miles for daily activities. Today, we Uber from the living room to the bed room! The human spine thrives on movement. The more sedentary you are, the stiffer and more vulnerable your spine becomes. Some daily movements you could easily incorporate include a 30-minute brisk walk, 5-minute stretch breaks every hour if working or sitting and light yoga or physiotherapy-based exercises to improve flexibility.

Lifting - The Silent Saboteur: I've had patients throw their backs out trying to lift weights at the gym, a potted plant, or even their bike. The problem isn't the weight, it's the technique. Here are some crucial tips to keep your back safe while lifting moderate to heavy objects:

- Bend your knees, not your back.

- Keep the object close to your body.
- Avoid twisting while lifting.
- Engage your core for stability.
- If it feels too heavy, it probably is... ask for help!

Posture: The Everyday Offender: Bad posture is your biggest enemy, responsible for more backaches than we realize. Whether

you're hunched over your phone, craning your neck at a desktop, or slouched on a divan reading the newspaper, your spine is paying the price.

Strengthen to Support: A major cause of back pain is weak core muscles. These aren't just the 'six-pack abs', your core includes deep abdominal muscles, back extensors, and pelvic stabilizers that keep your spine aligned and protected. Without a strong core, your spine bears the full load of your body weight, movements and stress. Some effective and low-impact exercises include Planks (start with 10-20 seconds); Bird-dog (a gentle balance-building move); Table and Child's Poses; Leg raises (with back support); Swimming and Back arches. Ensure that you consult an orthopaedist before starting any regimen if you have chronic pain. These exercises are also to be avoided when patient has developed an episode of acute onset pain.

When Should You See an Orthopaedic Surgeon? Back pain can often be managed with conservative methods, but there are certain red flags where a visit to a specialist is essential.



These include Pain lasting more than 2 weeks; Pain radiating to your legs or feet; Pain accompanied by fever and/or loss of weight; Numbness, tingling or weakness in your limbs; Difficulty walking, standing or sitting; Night pain or pain that worsens when lying down; and Loss of bladder or bowel control (seek urgent care). Early diagnosis may lead to a less aggressive treatment. It is preferable preventing surgery wherever possible, but that can only be done if the issue is addressed timely.

Your Spine-Your Strength

The spine is much more than bones and discs... your posture is a reflection of how you present yourself to the world. Stand tall, align yourself, and let your body speak with the same confidence as your words. So, the next time you're polishing your superbike or rearranging your record collection, take some time out to service your spine too! It's more substantial and even more rewarding!

It's time to treat your back not as an afterthought, but as the foundation of your health and independence. After all, it supports you through every long work meeting, family gatherings (of course, with *bhonu*), and those well-deserved weekend bike rides!

[Disclaimer: The contents of this article should not be considered as formal medical advice. Kindly visit your orthopaedician for related treatment.]

5 Simple Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Take care of your lower back with these low-impact rehabilitation movements

1 Plank

Get in a push up position, with your forearms on the ground, shoulder-width apart. Keep your back straight and core tight.



2 Back Arch

Lay on your back, lift your hips, keep your back straight. Hold for 5 seconds, then repeat.



3 Swimming

This aerobic exercise is low-impact and gets blood flowing to your lower back muscles. Losing weight can also help reduce back pain.



4 Bird Dog

Start on your hands and knees. Extend one leg; hold for 5 seconds. For a more advanced option, extend your opposite arm.



5 Table and Child's Poses

Start on your hands and knees in the table pose with a straight back. Then, bend your knees and hips so your glutes are on your heels and your hands are extended forward.

