Mind your back

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Before

After!
Back pain

- Common up to 80% of population, intermittently debilitating, but manageable and often preventable
- Causes are manifold but include: age (30-50 yrs), genetics, smoking, injury, sedentary lifestyles, heavy loading (including obesity)
- Commonest kind: ‘non-specific low back pain’
When to consult a doctor

1. Consult *immediately*: loss of bowel / bladder control, bilateral leg symptoms, numb ‘saddle’ area, coordination loss affecting mobility

2. Consult *promptly*: weight loss, fevers, worse at night, previous cancer, steroids, if over 50

3. Consult: depression, still stuck after 3-4 weeks despite pain relief, getting worse
MANAGEMENT

Prevention
- Maintain good muscle strength: swim, walk, Pilates
- Posture: when sitting, lifting, sleeping, at home and at work
- Core muscle work

Cure
- Avoid prolonged bed rest (more than 2 days)
- Effective pain relief: ice pack initially, use paracetamol, ibuprofen/ neurofen, low-dose amitriptyline at night for sciatica
- Get moving gently: exercises (NHS web) or therapy e.g. physiotherapy
- Treat depression promptly, see GP
What really is the core?

- Describes the ability to control the position and movement of the central portion of the body
- It is NOT simply your abdominal muscles, ie ‘the six pack’
- It is the deeper abdominal muscles
- Pelvic floor
- Transverse Abdominis
- Multifidus
Why are the core muscles so important?

• They provide support and stability around your midsection

• In a healthy back, these muscles would work together to stabilize the spine so we can move our extremities smoothly and effectively
Why Core?

• Sitting in a chair core supports posture

• When walking core provides stability to propel you forward

• When running or playing sports, core stabilises against increased forces
Why do they become inhibited?

• It is thought the core muscles become inhibited to allow an injured joint to swell

• The muscles sit very closely to the joint and, if they did not switch off, there would be significant pressure exerted on the joint

• When they shut down, they stop stabilizing the small movements of the spine, which in turn can create more pain in the lower back
Core Muscles

• Transversus Abdominus
• Pelvic Floor
• Multifidus
Why Core?

• Research has shown that specific training and activation of the core muscles helps people to feel better faster

• Patients have fewer recurrences of their back pain than the patients who do not learn how to specifically activate their core
QUESTIONS