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Spinal Rehabilitation Stage 2: Stability Exercises

Important Notes

- Spinal flexibility is unrelated to injury; strength is unrelated to injury.
- **Endurance** is related to **stability** which **reduces injury**.
- The body is weaker in the morning so avoid exercises in the first hour or two after getting up.
- Endurance stability exercises are best done daily.
- If any exercise is painful, adapt so that it is not painful or stop.
- Brisk walking daily for at least 20 minutes will enhance results.
- After 8 seconds, the blood supply to a contracting muscle is impaired, therefore only hold a position for up to 8 seconds (unless told otherwise!).

Birddog

- Birddog strengthens the back extensor muscles (erector spinae).
- This exercise is enhanced by gentle abdominal bracing where the abdominal muscles are tensed without either puffing out or sucking in.
- Avoid letting the spine either sink down or round up.
- Do not lift too high with either legs or arms as this will cause twisting of the spine.
- Keep your eyes looking straight down at the floor.

Remedial

1. Get on to all fours, resting squarely on your hands and knees
2. Lift each hand or foot, in turn, an inch or so off the floor.
3. Once this is pain free and easy, lift diagonally opposite hand and knee off the floor at the same time.
4. Hold each position for 1 to 8 seconds. Repeat 5 to 20 times in rotation.

Beginners

- Now progress to lifting one arm or leg at a time off the floor.
- Hold the limb straight out in front or behind, but without lifting above the horizontal.
- Hold each limb for 1 to 8 seconds. Repeat 5 to 20 times in rotation.

Intermediate

- Now try raising the diagonally opposite arm and leg out at the same time
- Keep a neutral, gently braced spine and abdomen.
- Do not lift the limbs above the horizontal.
- Hold for 1 to 8 seconds and repeat 5 to 20 times.

Advanced

- Instead of allowing the active limbs to rest every eight seconds, “sweep” the limbs back towards the resting position without letting them bear weight and then sweep back out into the birddog position
- This allows reoxygenation of the muscles but increases endurance.
- Repeat 5 to 20 times.