



# Healthy Balance

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## Exercises that maintain a healthy back:

- Cardiovascular: walking, biking, swimming, yoga and pilates. Stick to low impact workouts that are less wear and tear on your joints.
- Muscle Strength: abdominal crunches!!! Strong abs create support like a girdle! Try pilates to strengthen your abdominal powerhouse.
- Don't forget to stretch... particularly your hamstrings (they are often very tight when you have chronic low back pain). Just be careful to always bend your knees while stretching.
- Bend your knees whenever lifting, even light objects.

## Chronic Back Pain

It is estimated that 50% of people in Western industrialized countries will suffer from back pain at some time in their lives! Ouch! What are we doing that contributes to this ailment and what precautions can we take to avoid this type of pain?

Outside of acute trauma, there are four main causes for back pain: 1) excessive physical work, 2) invasion of cold and dampness, 3) overwork, and 4) inadequate exercise.

1) Excessive physical work, especially regularly lifting heavy objects, strains the muscles and depletes the energy of the kidneys (the kidney energy rules the back). Therefore, not only are you straining your back physically, but you also energetically injure your back. When the kidney energy is low, the back becomes sore and weak and more susceptible to physical injury. If this

cycle repeats itself continuously, back pain will ensue. It is important to lift properly, bending the knees, and not excessively.

2) Invasion of cold and damp – in Chinese Medicine, we say that nature has a profound effect on the body, both negative and positive. Cold and damp weather are particularly invasive and tend to linger, blocking the flow of energy and blood and causing pain. This is often associated with arthritic pain. Because your kidneys are fire of your vitality, they are particularly vulnerable to the invasion of cold and damp. So even though the sun has been shining lately, we still need to dress appropriately. Also, you should never be in wet clothes too long...especially if it's windy. Change your clothes before leaving the gym. Keep yourself warm!

Continued on back...

## Food of the month...CUCUMBERS

Cucumbers are the perfect snack in summertime. Not only are they cooling and sweet, but they also counteract toxins, cleanse the blood, quench thirst, and purify the skin. They act as a digestive aid as they contain a digestive enzyme that breaks down protein and cleanses the intestines. Eating cucumbers cools most inflammatory conditions, such as stomach inflammation, conjunctivitis, sore throat, acne, and inflamed skin.

Cucumber juice is also useful! It can

be applied to the skin to relieve burns, especially sunburns. A pack of grated cucumbers can be placed on the face to cool and beautify the skin. And, as most of us know, slices of cucumbers can be placed on the eyes to soothe irritation, dryness, and puffiness.

Check out the summer-time recipe on the back that incorporates this cool vegetable!



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## Back Pain continued

3) Overwork, such as working extremely long hours, depletes the kidney yin, which nourishes the back. This leads to back pain as well as fatigue, loss of concentration, and insomnia. Better re-think those 14 hour days!

4) Inadequate exercise is a huge factor in the increase of back problems. Most people have sedentary jobs and use their car to get around. This lack of movement weakens the muscles and

ligaments around the spine, predisposing one to disc problems. Although it is not recommended to lift heavy objects, it is necessary to move around and participate in some daily activity to keep the body supple and healthy.

Sometimes there is no way to avoid back pain, like a car accident. However, sufficient exercise followed by adequate rest will benefit any back and aid in health maintenance.

## Sea Bass (or tofu) in a Champagne and Cucumber Sauce

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 lb. Sea bass

(or use tofu)

1 1/2 C champagne

1 cucumber, seeded  
and sliced in half  
lengthwise, and then  
into 1/2 slices.

2 scallions chopped

3/4 Cup whole milk

1/2 teaspoon salt

Pour the champagne into a large skillet and bring to a boil. Add the scallions, salt, and fish (or tofu) and bring back to a boil. Lower the heat to medium-low and cover. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add the cucumbers and cook until the fish is done (when it is easily flaked using a fork), around 3-4 minutes. Remove the fish (tofu) and vegetables but keep them warm. Increase the heat and continue to cook the champagne until only 1/2 cup remains. Then blend in the milk. Spoon the sauce onto a plate and place the fish and veggies on top.

This meal is very light and summery! The tofu version is just as good as the sea bass...honestly!! Bon Appetit!!



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