

5 moves to save your spine

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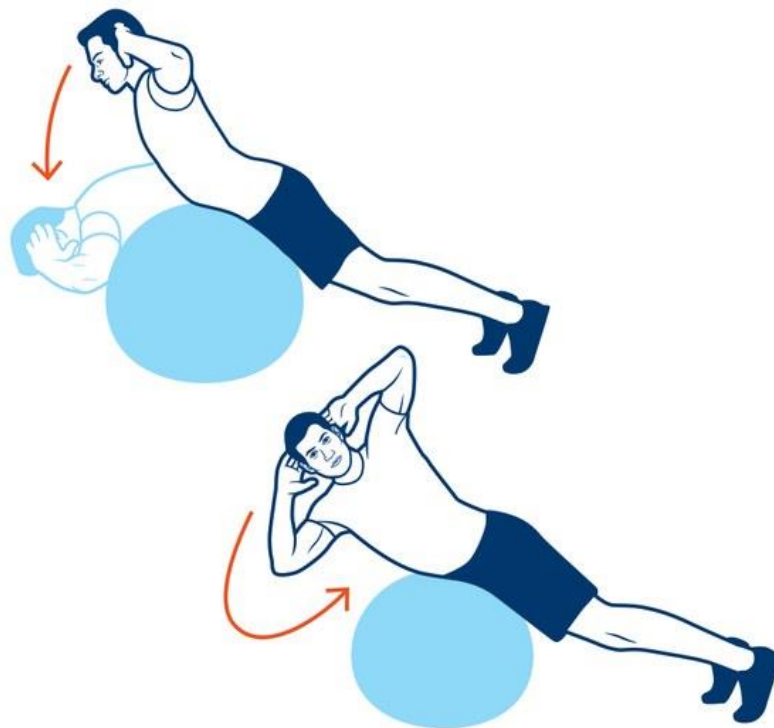


Even the most technically sound swings cause stress on the spine, but golf doesn't have to sentence you to future back pain. To avoid discomfort, says Golf Digest Fitness Advisor **Ben Shear**, "strengthen the muscles at the bottom of the

spine, and improve flexibility in the mid and upper back." All you need is a stability ball (\$10), and you can put together a back workout with these five moves.

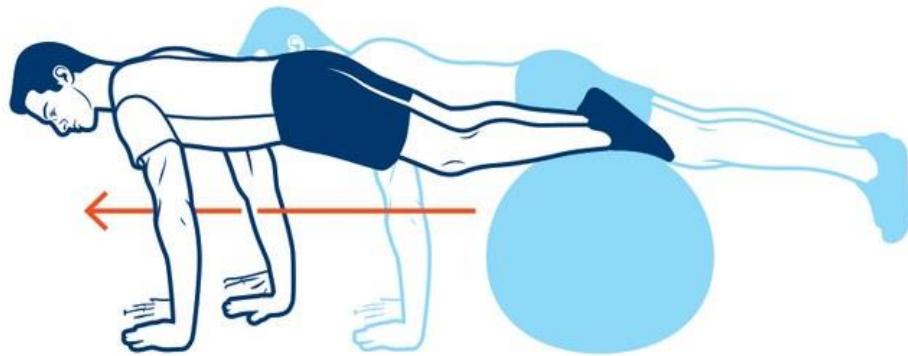
BACK EXTENSION

Lie face down, folded over the ball with your hands behind your head, elbows flared. Rise up until your spine feels straight. Rotate your torso to the left and to the right as far as you can. Return to start and repeat (10 reps). The goal : Strengthen the erector spinae and other low-back muscles that protect the spine from torsion forces.



WALK-OUT PRONE PLANK

Get in a push-up position with the ball resting under your upper thighs. Keeping your spine flat, walk forward with your hands until the ball is under your feet. Return to start and repeat (10 reps). The goal: The core muscles around your mid-section need to be strong to stabilize the body as you swing.



REACH-THROUGH

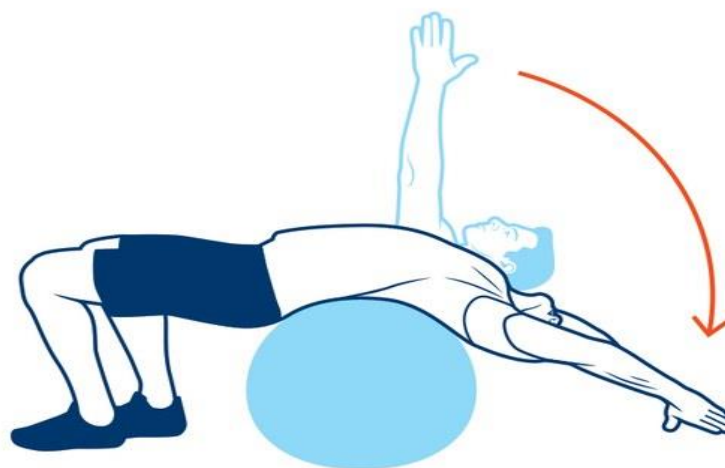
Start on all fours. Reach under and across your body to rest the back of your hand on the ball. Push the ball away from you as you rotate your trunk and head in that direction. Return to start and repeat (10 reps, each direction). The goal: Improve mid- and upper-back rotational mobility to lessen stress on the lumbar vertebrae.



REVERSE PATTERN

Lie on the ball so your back and spine flex toward the ground

with your arms extended up. Lean back and extend your arms as far as you can. Hold the position for five seconds, return to start and repeat (10 reps). The goal: Negate the effects that prolonged sitting can have on the anterior trunk muscles. This exercise strengthens the muscles, allowing you to swing on plane.



SIDE STRETCH AND CRUNCH

Lie on your side on the ball and flex toward the ground,

extending your top arm over your head as far as you can. Hold for five seconds and then put that hand behind your head and contract that side into a crunch (10 reps, each side). The goal: The muscles on the side of your trunk (obliques) improve lateral and rotational movement of your upper body, reducing stress on the lower back.

