

Health ESSENTIALS

The inside scoop to keep you in peak condition



BACK TO BASICS

Hunched over a desk all day, or lugging around a heavy handbag? Your back might be under a lot of stress and strain. Luckily, there are ways you can strengthen your spine...

Charlene Hutsebaut is a personal trainer and fitness entrepreneur (postivelyslim.ning.com). She says:

"Start the strengthening process at home with some ballet-like stretches in the shower. It may seem strange, but while washing your armpits lean over to the side and bring your rib cage closer to the top of your pelvis. Hold this for around 15 seconds and then switch sides. Next, while brushing your teeth, stand with what you feel is good posture by holding your shoulder blades back towards your spine, shoulders away from your ears, rib cage floating over your pelvis and tummy muscles gently engaged. These positions get your posture set for the day ahead by using your own strength to pull your shoulder blades back, open your chest and get your core muscles firing. All these elements are important if you're after better posture at your desk or hunched over a keyboard."

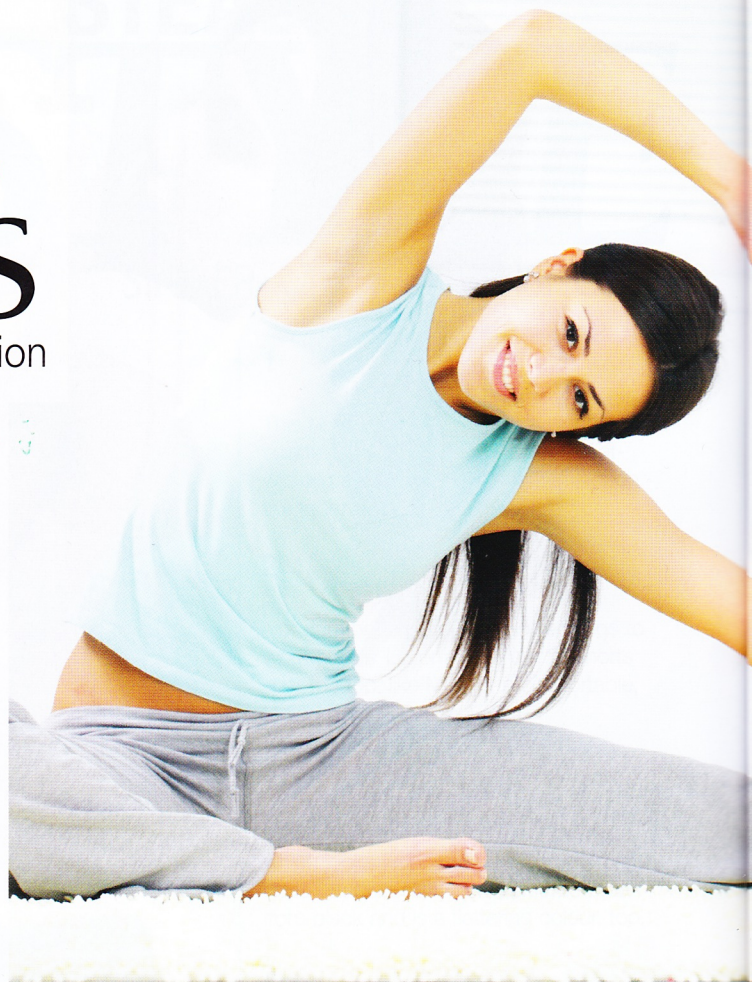
stand tall

"Posture and core strength can be improved throughout any exercise or movement you do. The key positions to remember while active, whether you are at the gym, swimming or doing a brisk walk, is to retract and depress your shoulder blades before you begin your exercise. Hold this position while you're moving, then gently tighten your abs, by pulling your belly button back to your spine."

go for a walk

"At work you can focus on strengthening your back and stretching your chest during these

desk breaks. Try standing in the corner of a room or a doorway, and placing your forearms and hands on the walls. Then, step through into the corner with one foot or through the doorway, keeping your abs engaged and your elbows below shoulder height. Allow your chest to stretch and lengthen your collarbone."



Q&A

SPORTING HEALTH

Olympic gold medallist in skeleton, Amy Williams tells us about setting herself new goals...

BF: How did you train for the Tough Mudder event?

AW: "It's a crazy personal challenge! It's 10-12 miles of obstacle courses, testing your strength, stamina and mental grip. I'm gearing up to go through mud, fire and ice water! I'm looking forward to working as a team – you're not up against the clock, so it's all about pulling together until the end. I've been going for a few runs, bike rides and swimming sessions to up my cardio levels ahead of the event."

BF: As you've just retired, do you still maintain a strict workout regime?

AW: "I still feel as if I could give a lot to my sport and I'd love to compete, but I've carried a lot of injuries over the past eight years, and I had to listen to my body. Normally I'd be in the gym every day – skeleton is all about speed, power and explosiveness, so I did a lot of weight training and core stability work. Now, I want to get my general fitness higher. I recently suffered a knee injury, so I've started cycling instead."

BF: How do you cope with a training set back?

AW: "It's difficult for any athlete to go from the peak of fitness to doing nothing, but mentally you've always got an end goal to spur you on. I set myself little tasks, no matter how small or significant they might be. So, at the moment, my first challenge is to ease myself back in with a 30-minute jog! Then, once I'm a bit fitter, I can aim for a local competition or event – it doesn't have to be a huge goal, just something achievable."



Amy Williams was speaking as a member of Team Dyno-Rod who will be competing in Tough Mudder at Cholmondeley Estates, Cheshire, 17th November. You can register for this event by visiting facebook.com/DynoRodUK