

ACTIVE ASSISTED BALL STRETCHES

The first stage in any spinal rehabilitation program begins with the restoration of pain-free range of motion. For the lumbar spine, this should start with tracks of movements that emphasize extension and flexion, followed by lateral bending and lastly, rotation. While later stages of spinal rehabilitation often include the Exercise Ball to enhance proprioceptive training and core muscle stability, it can also be an extremely effective tool to enhance flexibility and bring about the patient's transition from active assisted stretching to self care.

CAT AND CAMEL BACKS (FIG. 1, 2)¹

This is a great exercise to introduce the ball into a spinal rehabilitation program. As the patient encourages spinal flexion and extension he also learns important concepts with respect to the Exercise Ball, such as control, patient positioning and relaxation.

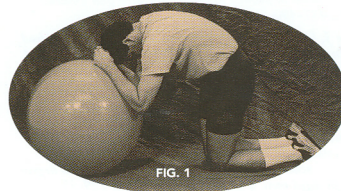


FIG. 1

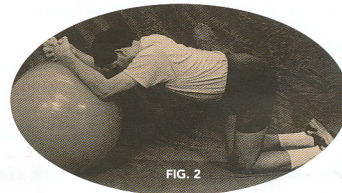


FIG. 2



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

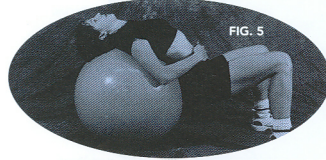


FIG. 5

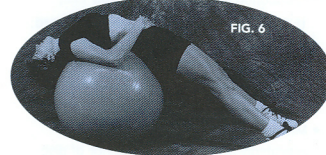


FIG. 6

PIRIFORMIS STRETCH (FIG. 3, 4)²

Figure 4 demonstrates how the Exercise Ball can be used to facilitate a stretch of the deep hip muscles. Unlike an assisted towel stretch where the shoulders must pull to achieve a stretch, the exercise ball provides the patient complete control of the stretch while the upper body is relaxed.

BACK BEND (FIG. 5, 6)³

This is an extremely effective exercise for the patient on a low back extension track (i.e. Sloppy Push track, Bridges, etc.). The patient begins with bent knees and his or her neck and back resting on the ball. In extending the legs, the patient is in complete control of a sustained extension stretch on the neck and back. (A 75 cm ball is preferred and a small towel behind the neck may provide some relief for those with marked forward head carriage).

Introducing the Exercise Ball in the first stage of a spinal rehabilitation

program where the goal is pain-free range of motion is an extremely effective way to make patients comfortable with it. Not only does it require very little effort and time, but it facilitates the use of the Exercise Ball in later stages of rehab. ▲

REFERENCES:

- 1 *The BackTracks Ball Poster*, L. Panetta, *EuroCan Rehab 2000*
- 2 *Ibid*
- 3 *Ibid*



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