

**IT'S EASY!:** Discover The Secrets to Stay Fit, Active, Young and Healthy

# fitpress

W O M E N ' S

**& HEALTH**

Vol. 9 No. 8  
AUST \$6.95 Inc GST  
N.Z. \$8.50 Inc GST



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# Align Yourself for balanced Health

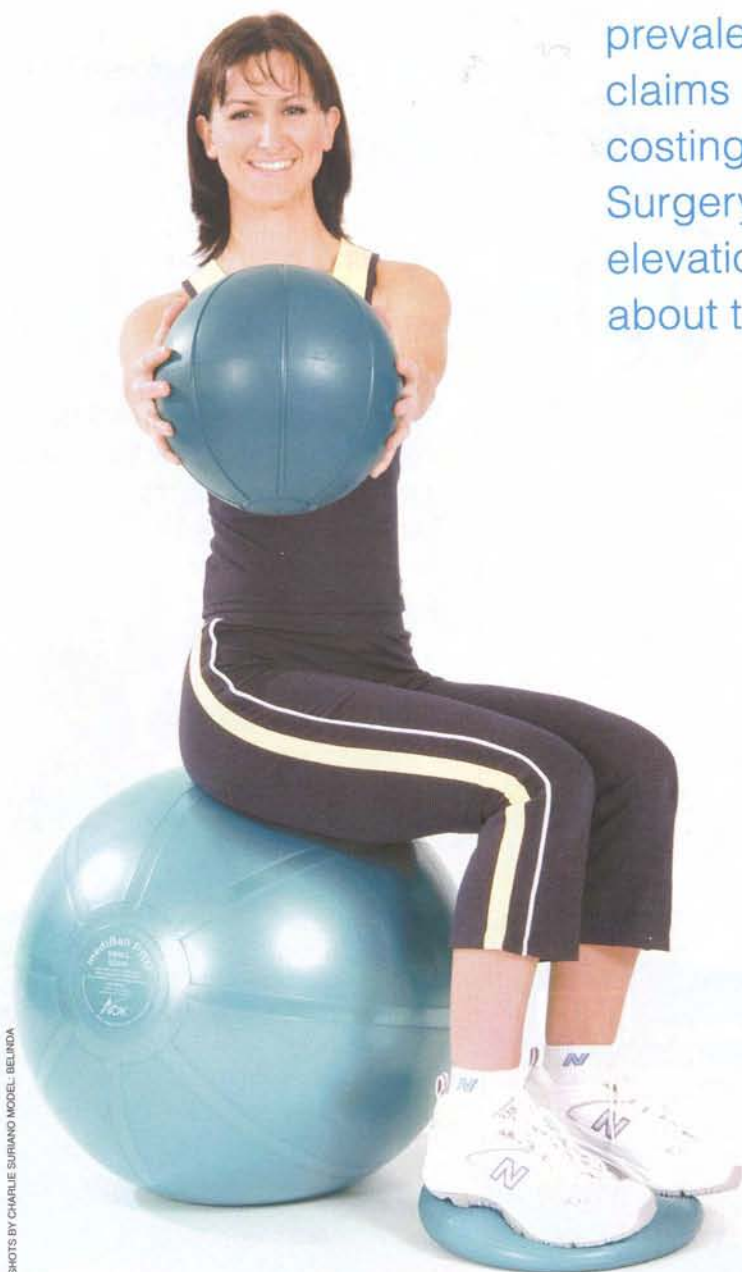
**“We have over 600 muscles in our body – most associated in keeping us upright and moving”**

The increase in chronic musculoskeletal symptoms being treated in Australia is becoming more prevalent, and workers' compensation claims and repetitive strain injuries are costing all of us. What is the answer? Surgery? Drugs? Rest, ice and elevation works for some, but what about the others?

Let's take a look at an ancient concept often seen in yoga and tai-chi – segmental alignment and balance. What is segmental alignment? It is defined as the proper alignment of the body segments that is maintained through unconscious neurological and muscular controls. Humans, to move erect species in the presence of gravity, are designed to have our spine aligned centrally to our primary weight-bearing joints – shoulders, hips, knees and ankles – which line up over and above one another. The right and left sides, being mirror images of one another in both form and function, each bear half the weight. This right-angled design confers the greatest structural integrity (neutrality) to the human form in relation to the force of gravity.

Correct segmental alignment allows the body to move fluidly and efficiently. We have developed movement patterns that make the most of our structures. Muscles and tendons are less susceptible to restriction and strain. The bones move such that gravitational force is evenly distributed across joint surfaces. Proper segmental alignment also permits the internal organs to function properly. Overall, good posture allows the body to perform its daily functions with less effort and energy.

We have over 600 muscles in our body – most associated in keeping us upright and moving. Each of



SHOTS BY CHARLIE SURIANO MODEL: BELINDA

these muscles has a unique origin and insertion via tendons to bones, and a unique function: no two muscles do exactly the same thing. All the links in this complex chain must be sound in order for proper function; any interruption along the path affects the integrity of the whole.

The muscles can be divided by function into postural (tonic) and dynamic (phasic) muscles. Some of the muscles may have mixed properties; however, they can be classified by predominant tendencies. The postural muscles are designed to maintain their constant length despite the application of force. The dynamic muscles adjust to varying positions and tensions.

Injury, poor posture and lack of use, however, may lead to our inability to balance our body weight, effectively removing the proper loading of the spine, long bones and joints, and the balanced pull of the muscles.

Some studies have found that poor posture and lack of use alone may lead to musculo-skeletal imbalance in as little as six to eight hours. This is an average workday for a desk bound employee in Australia. The lifestyle changes from 10,000 years ago to the present day are enormous. We began as movement creatures, hunters and gatherers, dependent on motion for survival. We have "progressed" into the muscular passivity of the super technological age. Is it any wonder that 80 percent of our population suffers from some kind of musculoskeletal pain? Is it a "natural result of aging"?

The following exercises are designed challenge our primal alignment reflexes and movement patterns to help you maintain health and well being, recover from injury and just pure fun.

## Cues For All Exercises

- Don't hold your breath
- Keep your back in neutral lordosis (small curve in lower back)
- Keep your head erect with chin very slightly tucked (look straight ahead)
- Keep knees over feet
- Brace your abdominal wall (purse your lips and pretend to blow up a balloon – you will feel your abdominal wall tighten up)

## Duradisc Lunge

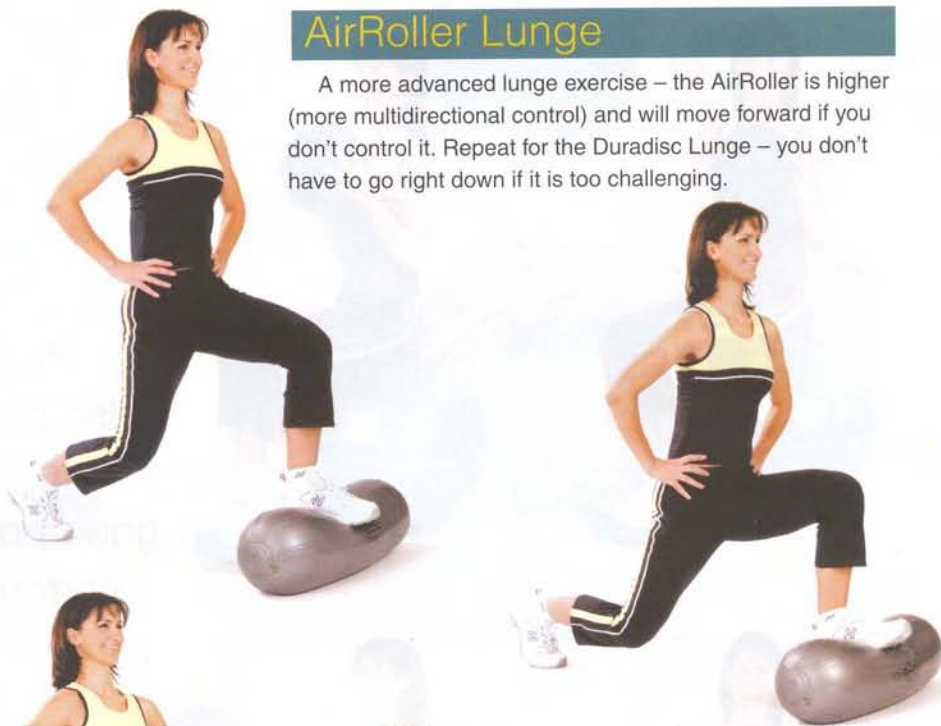
Front foot balanced on the Duradisc (ankle under control) and drop opposite knee to just above floor and hold for five seconds – repeat at least 10 times for each side. The disc moves slightly in all directions underfoot forcing your nervous system to adjust to control posture while you move.



WORKOUT

## AirRoller Lunge

A more advanced lunge exercise – the AirRoller is higher (more multidirectional control) and will move forward if you don't control it. Repeat for the Duradisc Lunge – you don't have to go right down if it is too challenging.



## Duradisc Squat

Just standing still on a Duradisc is a challenge as you shift your body to maintain posture. So a simple half squat will test your balance and posture. This can also be done using a disc under each foot to keep the feet, shoulder width apart. You can squat right to your haunches or go half way – as long as you maintain good back position.



## Medicine Ball Squat

Medicine balls have been around for a 1000 years and are an essential part of your home gym. Using it in conjunction with the Duradisc even a 3kg ball will make a great progression for this exercise. Remember quality not quantity for all exercises.

## Feet on Duradisc

Sitting correctly on a Swiss Ball inflated for your body size is a great way to stimulate the postural muscles of the lumbar spine and abdomen - your segmental stabilisers. As much of your stability is gained from your feet on the floor - a Duradisc under your feet forces you to develop much greater control of these muscles. Don't overdo it! 30-60 seconds is plenty.



Proper segmental alignment also permits the internal organs to function properly. Overall, good posture allows the body to perform its daily functions with less effort and energy.

## Medicine Ball Rotation

Remember your alignment for this more complex pattern. Move at own speed but always under control. The further away from your body you hold the ball the greater the force will be apply to your body - particularly your lumbar spine.





### Prone Forward Ball

A challenging progression by having your knees on the AirRoller you are forced to keep your pelvis level and recruit your abdominal wall much more strongly. Try to keep your knees in the same position as you extend the ball with your arms.



### Prone Bridge Hips

This is a great exercise for your back, buttocks and shoulders. Keep your trunk level and in lordosis and raise both legs simultaneously – do not hyper extend to a position synchronous with standing erect. Use your buttocks to start the lift. Hold for 15-60 seconds and repeat 10 times. Raise your legs to horizontal and return to the floor.



### Variation Prone Bridge Hips

This time start with the medicine ball between your knees – hold and then flex (bend at the knees) and hold, then relax to the floor. This adds the hamstring complex to the exercise.

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