

BOOK REVIEW

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Title: 7 Steps to a Pain-Free Life: How to Rapidly Relieve Back and Neck Pain Using the McKenzie Method.
Authors: Robin Mckenzie with Craig Kubey
Publisher: 2005, OPTP, Minneapolis, MN: Phone: 800-367-7393, www.optp.com
Reviewer: J.K. Tidmore
Editor: Carol Parikh

I've heard there are adults who have never had back or neck pain. I've never met any of them, but I sincerely hope that they do exist, like angels or unicorns. For the rest of us, back or neck pain is a fact of life, either as an occasional twinge at the end of a long, cramped flight or as a constant companion that dogs our every step.

This book by Robin McKenzie, a physical therapist in New Zealand whose previous books have sold millions of copies, seems like a perfect place to seek relief. More than 20,000 physical therapists, doctors, and chiropractors in 35 countries have been trained in the McKenzie method, and numerous scientific studies show that it works. 7 Steps describes 14 simple exercises (seven for the back and seven for the neck) with step-by-step instructions illustrated by more than 100 photos. Like yoga, these exercises use breathing and stretching to relax specific parts of your body.

The McKenzie method offers several advantages over other forms of physical therapy. The first advantage is that you can do the exercises by yourself, no appointment needed. The second advantage is that the exercises have no side effects, and the third advantage is that they cost no more than the price of this book. (According to the authors, back pain costs the United States from \$50 to \$70 billion a year.) The fourth advantage is that they address the root cause of the problem rather than just the symptoms, so when the pain is gone, the problem will probably be gone too. In fact, the only disadvantage of the McKenzie method is that you have to actually do the exercises and can't simply turn yourself over to some white-coated maven.

Because McKenzie believes that correct posture is essential to preventing injury as well as to relieving pain permanently, his book is full of advice on choosing ergonomic furniture and the best ways to move. There's even an appendix that tells you how to find a McKenzie-trained therapist which you probably won't need to do after you read this book.