

Low Back Pain Exercises

Exercises that stretch and strengthen the muscles of your abdomen and spine can help prevent back problems. If your back and abdominal muscles are strong, it will help you to maintain good posture and keep your spine in its correct position.

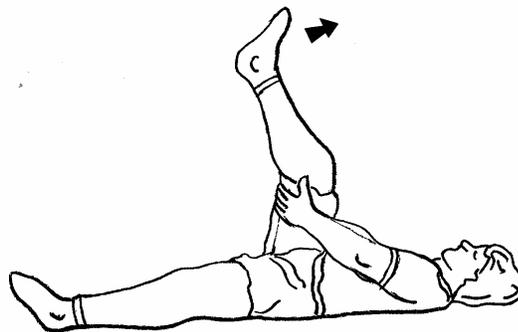
Warm up your muscles with light aerobic activity like brisk walking before doing any strengthening or stretching. Wear loose clothing to make it easier to do the exercises. Stop doing any exercise that causes pain until you have talked with your health care provider.

These exercises are meant only as suggestions. Ask your health care provider or physical therapist to help you design a program to fit your unique needs.

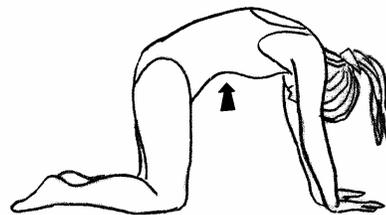
Caution: If you have a herniated disk or other disk problem, check with your health care provider before doing these exercises.

Exercises

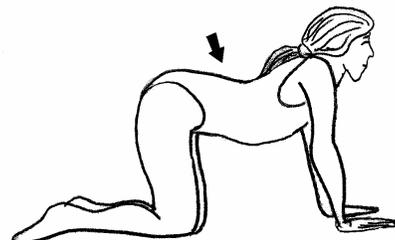
- **Lying supine hamstring stretch:** Lie on your back with a small rolled towel under your waist (lower back). Place your left leg down with knee straight. Bend your right hip so your knee is pointing to the ceiling. Hold your right thigh by locking your fingers. Keep your elbows straight while holding and straighten your right knee and move the foot toward the ceiling. You should feel a stretch on the backside of your thigh. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 2 times. Repeat the same stretch on your other leg.



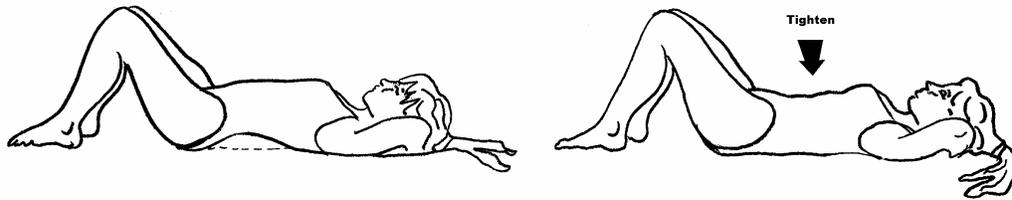
- **Cat Stretch:** In a hands and knee position, place your hands under the shoulders and the knees under your hips. Let your head drop down while at the same time tuck your hips under and raise the middle of your back as high as you can. You should try to create a gradual curve of your back towards the ceiling. Hold the position for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



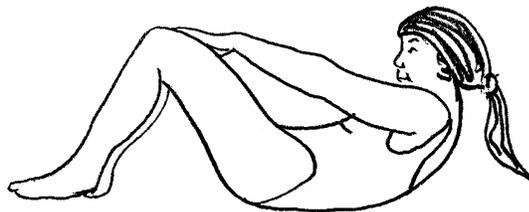
- **Camel Stretch:** In a hands and knee position, place your hands under the shoulders and the knees under your hips. Raise your head up while at the same time raise your hips up and allow your stomach to fall to the floor. Hold the position for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



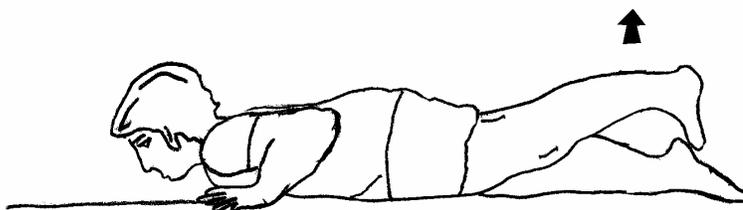
- **Pelvic tilt:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles and push your lower back into the floor. Hold this position for 5 seconds, and then relax. Do 2 sets of 10.



- **Partial curl:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your stomach muscles and flatten your back against the floor. Tuck your chin to your chest. With your hands stretched out in front of you, curl your upper body forward until your shoulders clear the floor. Breathe out as you come up. Hold this position for 3 seconds. Relax. Repeat 10 times. Build to 3 sets of 10. To challenge yourself, clasp your hands behind your head and keep your elbows out to the side.



- **Prone hip extension:** Lie on your stomach with your legs straight out behind you. Tighten up your buttocks muscles first and then lift one leg off the floor about 4-8 inches. Keep your knee straight. Hold for 5 seconds. Then lower your leg and relax. Repeat with the other leg. Do 3 sets of 10.



Exercises to avoid

Don't do these exercises because they strain the lower back:

- Lying on your stomach with legs extended and lifting together
- sit-ups with legs straight
- hip twists
- hurdlers stretch
- Any stretching that requires quick and bouncy movements.

Sports and other activities

Besides conditioning your back, you need to condition your whole body. Physical activities such as walking or swimming can help strengthen your back. It is always best to check with your health care provider before you start any rigorous exercise program. Always begin your program slowly.

Good activities for people with back problems include:

- walking
- biking
- swimming
- strength training on machines
- aerobic exercise on machines

Sports that may not be safe for your back because of rough contact, twisting, sudden impact, or direct stress on your back include:

- football
- soccer
- volleyball
- handball
- high intensity weight lifting
- trampoline
- tobogganing
- sledding
- snowmobiling
- ice hockey.

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Information maintained by the UMHS Clinical Care Guidelines Committee