



Low Back Pain

Most everyone experiences low back pain at some point. It most often occurs between the ages of 30 and 50, and is frequently due to a lack of fitness. Other causes of low back pain include muscle strains or spasms, or lifting heavy objects.

Mild back pain may be helped by a heating pad, ice pack, or massages. Over-the-counter pain medication, such as ibuprofen, may also be helpful.

To prevent further back pain, it is often helpful to add moderate aerobic exercise and abdominal strength training. Also, always bend at the knees, and hold the heavy item close to the body while lifting. If you must stand for long periods, place one foot on a low stool to relieve pressure on the back. Side sleeping is the safest, or back sleeping with a pillow under the knees.

Here are some exercises and stretches for strengthening the lower back:

Back Pain Stretch #1: Pelvic Tilt

- Start on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- As you exhale, contract your abdominal muscles, pushing your belly button towards the floor and flattening your low back.
- Hold 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.
- Cautions: While doing the pelvic tilt, do not push out your abdominal muscles or raise your low back off the floor. You need to pull your abdominals in towards the floor (it really does help to think about pushing your belly button in towards your back).

Back Pain Stretch #2: Knee to Chest

- The knee to chest stretch is used to stretch your hip and low back (lumbar spine) muscles. It should also help relieve pressure on spinal nerves by creating more space for those nerves as they exit the spine.
- Start on your back.
- Gently pull one knee towards your chest, using your hands to hold your leg in the stretch.
- Hold 10 seconds. You should feel a stretch in your low back and hip.
- Switch legs and pull your other knee towards your chest, again holding 10 seconds.
- Repeat 3-5 times with each leg.
- Bring both legs to your chest, holding 10 seconds and repeating 3-5 times.

Back Pain Stretch #3: Lower Trunk Rotation

- By doing the lower trunk rotation, you will work on increasing flexibility in your low back (lumbar spine) and hips, allowing for greater mobility and rotation in the spine.
- Start on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- With your knees together, bring them to one side. Your feet should stay on the floor.
- Hold 3-5 seconds.
- Contract your abdominal muscles while moving your legs to the opposite side, again holding for 3-5 seconds
- Repeat 5-10 times on each side.

Back Pain Stretch #4: Hamstring Stretch

- Tight hamstrings can contribute to low back pain. This hamstring stretch may decrease tension in the back of your leg and low back.
- Start on your back.
- Keeping your leg as straight as possible, gently pull it up until you feel a comfortable stretch. You can use a towel to help you pull.
- Hold 10-20 seconds.
- Switch to the other leg, again holding 10-20 seconds.
- Repeat 3 times on each side.

Back Pain Stretch #5: Bridge

- The bridge strengthens your low back and hip muscles, helping stabilize your spine.
- Start on your back with your arms by your side. Your knees should be bent, and your feet should be flat on the floor.
- Slowly raise your hips off the floor, contracting your buttocks and your hamstrings as you go.
- Hold 3-5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times.

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