

Level 1 Back Exercises

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Elbow Props

Purpose: To maintain and improve low back range of motion.

STEPS

1. Lay flat on your abdomen with your arms resting comfortably at your side.
2. Relax for 3 to 5 minutes.
3. Prop yourself up on your elbows.
4. Hold for 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Return to position 1 and relax for one minute.
6. Repeat 5 times.

TIPS

- Do not bend head backwards.
- Keep your back as relaxed as possible.



Press Ups

Purpose: To stretch abdominals and increase low back range of motion.

STEPS

1. Lay on your abdomen and place hands, palms down, next to your shoulders.
2. Slowly push your upper body up off the floor, straightening your arms as much as is comfortably possible.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. Return to starting position and relax.
5. Repeat 1-5 times.

TIPS

- Keep your pelvis on the floor and your eyes looking forward.
- Keep lower back and buttocks relaxed.



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Cat and Camel

Purpose: To stretch lower back.

STEPS

1. Start on your hands and knees, with shoulders vertically above wrists and with hips above knees.
2. On inhale: Arch back upward and lower head. Try to round spine as much as is comfortably possible. Tuck your pelvis under using abdominals and buttocks.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.
4. On exhale: Lift head upward and push your chest and abdomen toward the floor.
5. Hold for 5 seconds and then repeat step 2.
6. Repeat previous steps 5 times.

TIPS

- Move slowly, feeling a gentle stretch in your lower back.
- On inhale, avoid compressing lower back, instead, feel your chest expanding.



Prayer Stretch

Purpose: To warm up and gently stretch lower back.

STEPS

1. Start on your hands and knees, with your arms stretched out in front of you.
2. Extend your hips backward and move your face close to the floor. Try to touch your buttocks to heels.
3. Hold for 10 seconds and return to starting position.
4. Repeat previous steps 5 times.

TIPS

- Slide hands while maintaining arm positioning.
- Keep back straight.

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Knee-to-chest Raise

Purpose: To loosen and warm up lower back.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor.
2. With both hands, pull (don't lift) your right knee as close to your chest as possible. Keep your left knee bent with foot flat on the floor.
3. Repeat 5 times.
4. Repeat steps 1-4 with left leg.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 with both legs.

TIPS

- Don't "lift" legs with your hands and arms—just pull until you feel a gentle stretch in the lower back.
- If you have bad knees, put your hands under the knee and pull.
- If you'd like to intensify the stretch, straighten the leg that is not being pulled to the chest.



Pelvic Tilt

Purpose: To strengthen abdominal and back muscles

STEPS

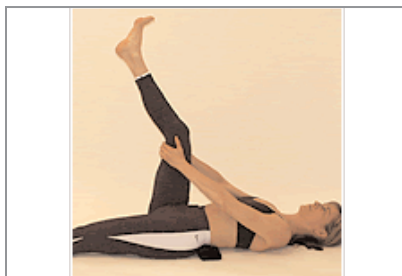
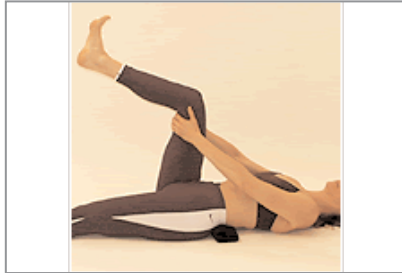
1. Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the floor.
2. Push the lower part of your back into the floor by tightening your abdominal and buttock muscles. Rotate the pelvis upward without bringing your back off the floor.
3. Hold for 5 seconds and then return to starting position.
4. Relax for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 5 times.

TIPS

- Keep your lower back flat against the floor.
- You may use a folded towel to support your low back.

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Hamstring Stretch (Lying Down)

Purpose: To warm-up and stretch hamstring.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back with arms at your side. Keep the left leg straight on the floor.
2. Lift right leg at hip approximately 90 degrees and place both hands behind right leg.
3. Keep elbows straight and slowly straighten right knee to feel stretch behind right leg.
4. Hold for 1-5 seconds.
5. Slowly return leg to floor and relax.
6. Repeat 5 times holding stretch longer each time.
7. Repeat previous steps with left leg.

TIPS

- You can also use a belt or a towel to help elevate the leg.
- No pain should be felt in low back with this exercise.
- You may place a folded towel under your low back for support.



Hamstring Stretch (Seated)

Purpose: To loosen tight hamstring muscles.

STEPS

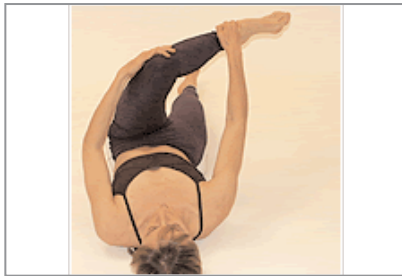
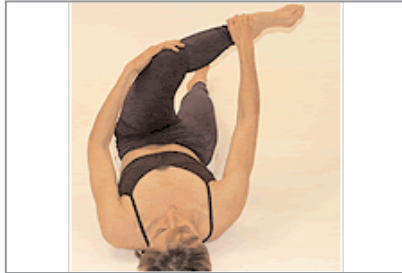
1. Sit upright on the floor with right leg straight and the left leg comfortably bent in front of your body.
2. Reach forward with your right hand toward your left foot until you feel tension in your hamstring.
3. Hold for 5-10 seconds and then relax.
4. Repeat 5 times holding stretch longer each time.
5. Repeat with your left leg and right hand.

TIPS

- You should bend at the waist and keep your back straight.
- For a more intense stretch, grasp foot with both hands.

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Piriformis Stretch

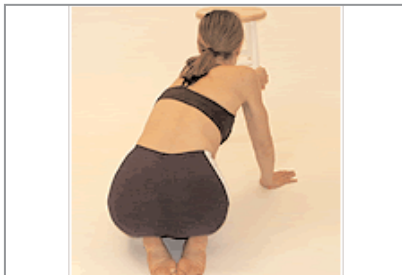
Purpose: To stretch buttock (piriformis) muscle.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back and lifting your left leg with your knee bent.
2. Grasp left leg with right hand over or under the ankle. Place left hand on outside of left knee.
3. Bring left leg knee toward midline of your chest.
4. Slowly increase pressure on ankle using right hand. Feel the stretch in your left buttocks.
5. Hold for 3-5 seconds.
6. Repeat 5 times.
7. Repeat with right leg.

TIP

- Keep your knee in line with your nose.



Kneeling Quadratus Lumborum Stretch

Purpose: To stretch low back, hips and sides.

STEPS

1. In the hands and knees position, reach forward with the left hand and grasp a secure object.
2. From this position sit back diagonally toward the left buttocks, elongating the left side.
3. The left arm may be internally rotated to increase the stretch.</step>
4. Work on elongation of the left side by dropping the pelvis further diagonally backward and toward the hip.
5. Hold for 5 seconds.
6. Repeat on opposite side.

TIP

- Pull head slowly.

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Side Stretch (Teapot)

Purpose: To stretch side of trunk.

STEPS

1. Stand upright and place your right hand on your right hip.
2. Bend to the left, reaching down with your left hand toward the outside of your left knee. Do not let your upper body bend forward.
3. Hold for 5 seconds then return to starting position.
4. Repeat 5 times.
5. Repeat steps 1-4 with left hand on left hip bending to the right.

TIP

- Do not let your upper body bend forward.



Standing Spinal Extension

Purpose: To stretch hips and abdomen; and to improve low back range of motion.

STEPS

1. Stand upright with your hands on your waist.
2. Gently arch your back as you push your hips forward.
3. Hold position for 2-5 seconds.
4. Slowly return to starting position and rest for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 5 times.

TIP

- Do not bend backwards too much.

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Isometric Abdominal

Purpose: To strengthen abdominal muscles.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back with your knees bent.
2. Hollow out your stomach by sucking in your abdominal muscles.
3. Tighten abdominal muscles in this position.
4. Hold for 3-5 seconds.
5. Repeat 5 times.

TIP

- Place towel under low back for support.



Isometric Buttocks

Purpose: To strengthen buttocks.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your stomach.
2. Squeeze your buttock muscles.
3. Hold for 5-10 seconds.
4. Repeat 5-15 times.

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Nose-To-Knee

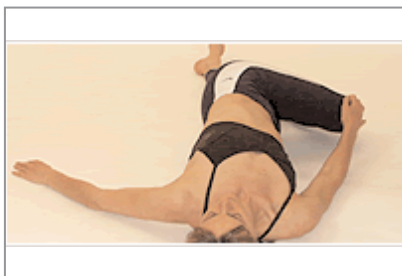
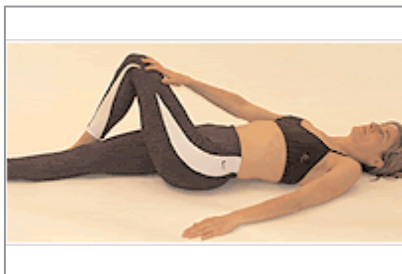
Purpose: To strengthen abdominal muscles; and to low back range of motion.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back.
2. Pull right knee to chest with both hands and hold as tightly as is comfortably possible.
3. Raise your head and touch your nose to your knee.
4. Hold for 5 seconds.
5. Repeat 5 times.
6. Repeat with the opposite knee.

TIP

- Keep your lower back touching the floor.



Hip Outside Leg Stretch

Purpose: To stretch low back, hips and legs. Also to improve low back range of motion.

STEPS

1. Begin by lying on your back and placing left leg on the outside of the right knee.
2. Pull your left knee down toward the floor with the right hand as far as is comfortably possible.
3. Hold for 10 seconds.
4. Slowly return to starting position
5. Repeat 5 times.
6. Repeat with right leg.

TIP

- Your hips will roll from side-to-side but keep your shoulders flat on the floor.

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Abdominal Strengthening

Purpose: To strengthen abdominal muscle.

STEPS

1. Lay on your back with knees bent. Place a towel in the small of your back. Keep your lower back pressed against the towel.
2. Tighten abdominal muscles and hold.
3. In one continuous move, slowly straighten left leg, pause, and then bring it back to the starting position. Do the same with right leg. Let your heels slide across the floor.
4. Maintain tightened abdominals as you alternate legs.
5. Repeat 5 times.

TIPS

- When unable to keep pressure on the towel with your lower back, Stop.