

# Low Back Pain: Exercises

## Your Care Instructions

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Here are some examples of typical rehabilitation exercises for your condition. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercise if you start to have pain.

Your doctor or physical therapist will tell you when you can start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

## How to do the exercises

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### Press-up

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1. Lie on your stomach, supporting your body with your forearms.
2. Press your elbows down into the floor to raise your upper back. As you do this, relax your stomach muscles and allow your back to arch without using your back muscles. As your press up, do not let your hips or pelvis come off the floor.
3. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds, then relax.
4. Repeat 2 to 4 times.

## Alternate arm and leg (bird dog) exercise

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Note: Do this exercise slowly. Try to keep your body straight at all times, and do not let one hip drop lower than the other.

1. Start on the floor, on your hands and knees.
2. Tighten your belly muscles.
3. Raise one leg off the floor, and hold it straight out behind you. Be careful not to let your hip drop down, because that will twist your trunk.
4. Hold for about 6 seconds, then lower your leg and switch to the other leg.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times on each leg.
6. Over time, work up to holding for 10 to 30 seconds each time.
7. If you feel stable and secure with your leg raised, try raising the opposite arm straight out in front of you at the same time.

## Knee-to-chest exercise

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1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
2. Bring one knee to your chest, keeping the other foot flat on the floor (or keeping the other leg straight, whichever feels better on your lower back).
3. Keep your lower back pressed to the floor. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds.
4. Relax, and lower the knee to the starting position.
5. Repeat with the other leg. Repeat 2 to 4 times with each leg.
6. To get more stretch, put your other leg flat on the floor while pulling your knee to your chest.

## Curl-ups

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1. Lie on the floor on your back with your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Your feet should be flat on the floor, about 12 inches from your buttocks.
2. Cross your arms over your chest. If this bothers your neck, try putting your hands behind your neck (not your head), with your elbows spread apart.
3. Slowly tighten your belly muscles and raise your shoulder blades off the floor.
4. Keep your head in line with your body, and do not press your chin to your chest.
5. Hold this position for 1 or 2 seconds, then slowly lower yourself back down to the floor.
6. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

## Pelvic tilt exercise

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1. Lie on your back with your knees bent.
2. "Brace" your stomach. This means to tighten your muscles by pulling in and imagining your belly button moving toward your spine. You should feel like your back is pressing to the floor and your hips and pelvis are rocking back.
3. Hold for about 6 seconds while you breathe smoothly.
4. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

## Heel dig bridging

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1. Lie on your back with both knees bent and your ankles bent so that only your heels are digging into the floor. Your knees should be bent about 90 degrees.
2. Then push your heels into the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line.
3. Hold for about 6 seconds as you continue to breathe normally, and then slowly lower your hips back down to the floor and rest for up to 10 seconds.
4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

## Hamstring stretch in doorway

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1. Lie on your back in a doorway, with one leg through the open door.
2. Slide your leg up the wall to straighten your knee. You should feel a gentle stretch down the back of your leg.
3. Hold the stretch for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Do not arch your back, point your toes, or bend either knee. Keep one heel touching the floor and the other heel touching the wall.
4. Repeat with your other leg.
5. Do 2 to 4 times for each leg.

## Hip flexor stretch

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1. Kneel on the floor with one knee bent and one leg behind you. Place your forward knee over your foot. Keep your other knee touching the floor.
2. Slowly push your hips forward until you feel a stretch in the upper thigh of your rear leg.
3. Hold the stretch for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat with your other leg.
4. Do 2 to 4 times on each side.

## Wall sit

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1. Stand with your back 10 to 12 inches away from a wall.
2. Lean into the wall until your back is flat against it.
3. Slowly slide down until your knees are slightly bent, pressing your lower back into the wall.
4. Hold for about 6 seconds, then slide back up the wall.
5. Repeat 8 to 12 times.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.



### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **Z938** in the search box to learn more about "**Low Back Pain: Exercises**".

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