



Exercises to help reduce Lower Back Pain

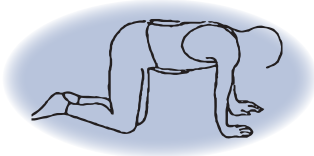
S. Kamal Fetouh, MD

The health benefits of regular exercise and physical activity are hard to ignore and can improve pain greatly. Everyone benefits from exercise, regardless of age, sex or physical ability. The goal of these exercises is to strengthen your abdominal muscles, stretch your lower back, hip flexors, and hamstrings: These exercises may help reduce lower back pain by correcting muscle imbalances in strength and flexibility of the trunk and hips.

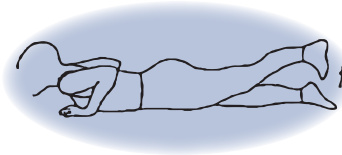
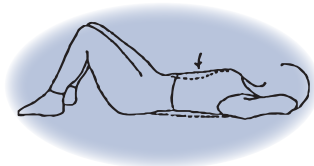
- ▶ **1. Hamstring Stretch:** Place the heel of one leg on a stool about 15 inches high. Lean forward, bending at the hips until you feel a mild stretch in the back of the thigh. Make sure you do not roll your shoulders and bend at the waist when doing this or you will stretch your lower back instead. Hold the stretch 30 to 60 seconds. Do the same with the other leg. Repeat 3 times.



- ▶ **2. Cat and Camel:** Get down on your hands and knees. Let your stomach sag, allowing your back to curve downward. Hold this position for 5 seconds, then arch your back. Repeat 10 times, Do 2 sets.

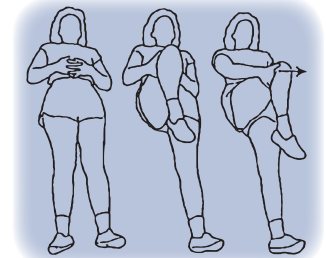


- ▶ **3. Pelvic Tilt:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your stomach muscles to flatten your lower back against the floor. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets.



- ▶ **4. Prone Hip Extension:** Lie on your stomach with your legs straight out behind you. Tighten your buttock muscles and lift your right leg off the floor, keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Then lower your leg and relax. Repeat the same with your left leg. Hold 5 seconds and then lower the leg and relax. Repeat 10 times on each side. Build up to 3 sets of 10.

- ▶ **5. Piriformis Stretch:** Lie on your back as shown. Pull one knee up and across your trunk so you feel a comfortable stretch in the top of the buttocks and back. Hold for 5-15 seconds and repeat 5-10 times on each side. You can modify this exercise by reaching for your knee with the opposite hand and keeping your shoulders flat on the floor. Pull your knee over as far as you can allowing your trunk to rotate.



Exercise and physical activity are great ways to feel better, boost your health and have fun. Spread your activities throughout the week. If you want to lose weight, meet specific fitness goals or get even more benefits, you may need to ramp up your moderate aerobic activity to 300 minutes or more a week. Remember to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program, especially if you have any concerns about your fitness, haven't exercised for a long time, have chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes or arthritis.

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