

Back-strengthening exercises

The exercises below can help you reduce flare-ups of routine muscle-related back pain. These are standard exercises that are often used in physical therapy. Show this page to your back care provider and ask if these would be helpful for you. If so, perform each set of exercises every day after acute back pain subsides and your doctor says it's safe. Take it slow, and stop if it hurts.

▼ Week 1: Getting started

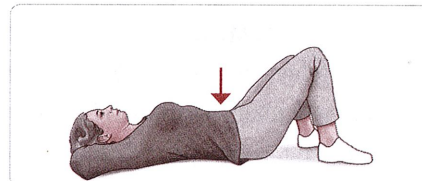
Perform these exercises every day in the first week of your exercise program.



Lie on your back with both knees bent. Pull one knee toward your chest and hold it for 5 to 10 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat with the other leg. Do this 5 to 10 times with each leg.



Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet on the floor. Pull both knees toward your chest and hold for 5 to 10 seconds. Return to the starting position. Do this 5 to 10 times.



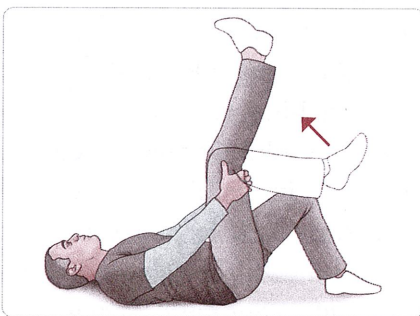
Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet on the floor. Gently flatten your lower back to the floor and hold for 5 to 10 seconds, then relax. Do this 5 to 10 times.

▼ Week 2: Taking it to the next level

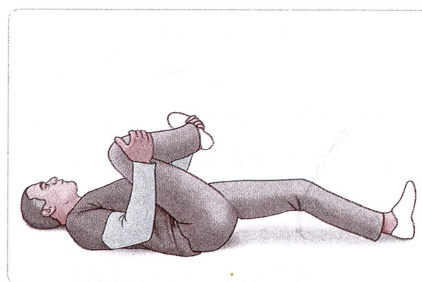
If you do not feel any change in symptoms, such as worsening pain, add these three exercises every day starting the second week.



Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet on the floor. Gently reach toward your knees, lifting your shoulders and head off the floor until your fingertips touch your knees. Hold this position for 5 to 10 seconds, then relax slowly back to the starting position. Do this 5 to 10 times.



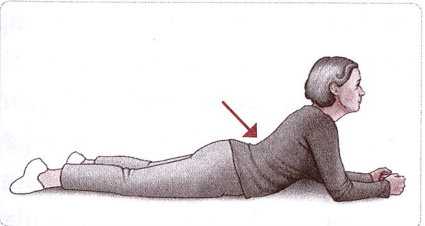
Lie on your back with both knees bent. Grasp the back of one leg behind the knee and pull it toward you, then very gently straighten the leg till it points vertically. Feel the stretch at the back of your thigh. Hold 5 to 10 seconds, then return to the starting position. Do this 5 to 10 times with each leg.



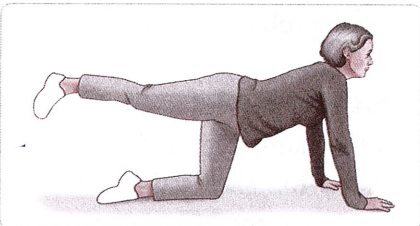
Lie on your back with your legs straight out. Bend your right knee and rotate your hip so that the lower leg is across your chest, pointing to the left. You should feel this stretch in your thigh. Hold for 5 to 10 seconds, then return to the starting position. Do this 5 times with each leg.

▼ Week 3: Strengthening your core

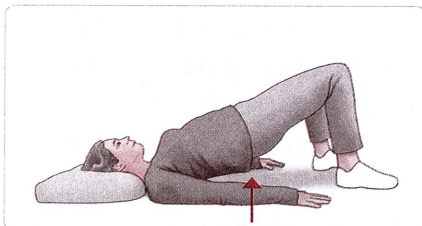
If you are doing well on your new exercise regimen, add these core-strengthening moves in the third week.



Lie face down on the floor, your bed, or an exercise mat. Bend your torso upward and rest the weight on your forearms. Gently arch your lower back and hold for 10 seconds, then relax. Repeat 5 to 10 times.



Start on your hands and knees. Lift and straighten one leg, extending it gently backward without lifting it above your body level. Hold the position for 5 seconds. Do this 5 to 10 times with each leg.



Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet on the floor. Gently raise your buttocks off the floor 4 to 6 inches, hold for 5 seconds, and return to the starting position. Do this 5 to 10 times.