

Stretching Exercises for Low Back Pain

- Stretching is a very important part of your treatment plan
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing. Do the stretching on a firm surface covered with a pad or blanket
- Do your exercises at the same times each day. You may need to do them several times a day
- Take short breaks from your normal activities to do the exercises.



1 | Knees to chest

Primarily stretches the back

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your legs extended on the floor.

Movement: Relax your shoulders against the floor. Slowly bend your knees and pull them in toward your chest with your hands. Hold. Return to the starting position.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- When holding the stretch, remain as still as possible, without bouncing.
- Breathe comfortably.



2 | Floor hip flexor stretch

Primarily stretches the front of the hip

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your legs extended on the floor.

Movement: Relax your shoulders against the floor. Bend your right knee. Rest your hands on the back of your thigh and pull your knee toward your chest. Flex your left foot and press the thigh and calf of that leg down toward the floor as you do so. Feel the stretch in the front of your left hip and top of your thigh. Hold. Return to the starting position and repeat with the other leg. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- When holding the stretch, remain as still as possible, without bouncing.
- Breathe comfortably.



3 | Floor pretzel

Primarily stretches the buttocks, hip, and outer thigh

Reps: 2

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your right knee bent and foot on the floor. Rest your left ankle at the top of your right knee. Your left knee should point toward the wall. Grasp the back of your right thigh with both hands.

Movement: Keep your shoulder down and back, relaxing them against the floor. Slowly lift your right foot off the floor until you feel the stretch in your left hip and buttock. Hold. Return to the starting position. Repeat with your left knee bent and your right ankle resting on your left knee. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- If it's too hard to grasp your thigh with both hands, put a strap or small towel around the back of the thigh and hold both ends.
- Hold the stretch as still as possible without bouncing.



4 | Single knee rotation

Primarily stretches the back, hip, and outer thigh

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your legs extended on the floor.

Movement: Relax your shoulders against the floor. Bend your left knee and place your left foot on your right thigh just above the knee. Tighten your abdominal muscles, then grasp your left knee with your right hand and gently pull it across your body toward the right wall. Hold. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- Try to keep both shoulders flat on the floor.
- To increase the stretch, look in the direction opposite to your knee.

5 | Double knee torso rotation

Primarily stretches the back, chest, hips, and outer thigh

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet together, flat on the floor. Put your arms out comfortably to each side at shoulder level, palms up.

Movement: Tighten your abdominal muscles and lift both knees toward your chest, then lower them together to the left side on the floor. Keeping your shoulders relaxed and pressed into the floor, look in the opposite direction. Feel the stretch across your chest and

torso. Hold. Bring both knees back to center and return your right foot, then your left foot, to the floor. Repeat in the opposite direction. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- If necessary, put a rolled towel between your knees to make this stretch easier.
- Try to bring both knees up into the lateral position. Ideally, keep them together throughout the stretch.



Sit in chair with knees spread apart. Bend forward to floor. A comfortable stretch should be felt in lower back.

Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 5 times per set. Do 1 sets per session. Do 2 sessions per day.



Tuck chin and tighten stomach, arching back.

Repeat 5 times per set. Do 1-2 sets per session. Do 1-2 sessions per day.



7 | Butterfly

Primarily stretches the shoulders and chest

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keeping your shoulders down and back, press them against the floor. Place both hands gently behind your head, elbows pointing toward the ceiling.

Movement: Slowly lower your elbows toward the floor to the point of tightness. Hold. Return to the starting position.

Tips and techniques:

- When holding the stretch, stay as still as possible, without bouncing.
- If necessary, limit the stretch by placing a small pillow on either side of your shoulders and gently pressing into the pillow.
- You can do this stretch while seated, too.



13 | Kneeling hip flexor stretch

Primarily stretches the front of the hip and the sides

Reps: 2

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Kneel with your hands at your sides.

Movement: Put your right leg in front of you with the knee bent at a 90-degree angle and foot flat on the floor. Place your hands on your right thigh for support. Lean forward, pressing into the hip of your left leg while keeping your right foot on the floor. Hold. Return to the starting position, then repeat with your left leg forward. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- Keep your head and spine neutral, your shoulders down and back, and your abdominal muscles tightened.
- Keep your pelvis tucked forward, rather than letting it tip back.



12 | Side-lying quadriceps stretch

Primarily stretches the front of the thigh

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your left side with your legs stacked and extended on the floor. Rest your left arm under your head.

Movement: Bend your right knee and bring your heel toward your right buttock, reaching back with your right hand to grasp your foot. Hold. Slowly return to the starting position. Turn onto your other side and repeat. This is one rep.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- If you have trouble reaching your foot, place a stretch strap around your ankle and gently pull the strap toward your buttocks.
- Breathe comfortably.



4 | Full-body stretch with strap

Primarily stretches the upper body, abdominal muscles, and lower body

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your back with both legs extended. Hold the strap shoulder-distance apart with both hands by your hips.

Movement: Slowly lift the strap up toward the ceiling, then over your head and back down toward the floor as you point your toes, keeping feet together. Hold. Return to the starting position.

Tips and techniques:

- Stretch to the point of mild tension, not pain.
- If you cannot comfortably bring your arms down to the floor when reaching overhead, try placing a pillow above your head and pressing the backs of your arms into it.
- Breathe comfortably.

8 | Cobra

Primarily stretches the back and abdomen

Reps: 2-4

Hold: 5 yoga breaths or 10-30 seconds

Starting position: Lie on your stomach with your forehead on the mat and legs comfortably extended with toes pointed. Place your hands just below your shoulders, palms facing down and fingers together.

Movement: Press your palms against the floor to slowly lift your head, shoulders, and chest. Keep your elbows back and soft, and your head and neck in neutral alignment. Hold. Return slowly to the starting position.

Tips and techniques:

- Lift only to the point of mild tension. You should feel no pain in your lower back.
- Be careful not to lock your elbows while lifting upward.
- While holding, take full breaths by inhaling gently through your nose and lengthening the outbreath as you exhale through your nose.

