

Preventing Back Pain

Picking Up a Light Object: To lift a very light object from the floor, such as a piece of paper, lean over the object, slightly bend one knee and extend the other leg behind you. Hold on to a nearby chair or table for support as you reach down to the object.

Picking Up a Heavy Object: Whether you are lifting a heavy laundry basket or a heavy box in your garage, plan ahead what you want to do and do not be in a hurry. Remember to get close to the object, separate your feet shoulder-width apart to give yourself a solid base of support, bend at the knees, and lift with your leg muscles. Do not bend at your waist. When lifting luggage, stand along side of the luggage, bend at your knees, grasp the handle and straighten up.

Don't try to lift an object that is too heavy or an awkward shape by yourself. Get help.

Holding an Object: While you are holding the object, keep your knees slightly bent to maintain your balance. If you have to move the object to one side, avoid twisting your body. Point your toes in the direction you want to move and pivot in that direction. Keep the object close to you when moving.

Placing an Object on a Shelf: If you must place an object on a shelf, move as close as possible to the shelf. Spread your feet in a wide stance, positioning one foot in front of the other to give you a solid base of support. Do not lean forward and do not fully extend your arms while holding the object in your hands.

If the shelf is chest high, move close to the shelf and place your feet apart and one foot forward. Lift the object chest high, keep your elbows at your side and position your hands so you can push the object up and on to the shelf. Remember to tighten your stomach muscles before lifting.

Supporting Your Back While Sitting: When sitting, keep your back in a normal, slightly arched position. Make sure your chair supports your lower back. Keep your head and shoulders erect. Make sure your working surface is at the proper height so you don't have to lean forward. Once an hour, if possible, stand, and stretch. Place your hands on your lower back and gently arch backward.

Low Back Pain Exercise Guide

Regular exercises to restore the strength of your back and a gradual return to everyday activities are important for your full recovery. Your orthopaedic surgeon and physical therapist may recommend that you exercise 10 to 30 minutes a day 1 to 3 times a day during your early recovery. They may suggest some of the following exercises. This guide can help you better understand your exercise and activity program, which should be supervised by your therapist and orthopaedic surgeon.

Initial Exercise Program

Ankle Pumps

1. Lie on your back.
2. Move ankles up and down. Repeat 10 times.
3. Repeat 10 times.

Heel Slides

1. Lie on your back.
2. Slowly bend and straighten knee.
3. Repeat 10 times.

Abdominal Contraction

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and hands resting below ribs.
2. Tighten abdominal muscles to squeeze ribs down toward back.
3. Be sure not to hold breath.
4. Hold 5 seconds.
5. Relax.
6. Repeat 10 times.

Wall Squats

1. Stand with back leaning against wall.
2. Walk feet 12 inches in front of body.
3. Keep abdominal muscles tight while slowly bending both knees 45 degrees.
4. Hold 5 seconds.
5. Slowly return to upright position.
6. Repeat 10 times.

Heel Raises

1. Stand with weight even on both feet.
2. Slowly raise heels up and down.
3. Repeat 10 times.

Straight Leg Raises

1. Lie on your back with one leg straight and one knee bent.
2. Tighten abdominal muscles to stabilize low back.
3. Slowly lift leg straight up about 6 to 12 inches and hold 1 to 5 seconds.
4. Lower leg slowly.
5. Repeat 10 times.

Single Knee to Chest Stretch

1. Lie on your back with both knees bent.
2. Hold thigh behind knee and bring one knee up to chest.
3. Hold 20 seconds.
4. Relax.
5. Repeat 5 times on each side.

Hamstring Stretch

1. Lie on your back with legs bent.
2. Hold one thigh behind knee.
3. Slowly straighten knee until a stretch is felt in back of thigh.
4. Hold 20 seconds.
5. Relax.
6. Repeat 5 times on each side.

Lumbar Stabilization Exercises With Swiss Ball

Abdominal muscles must remain contracted during each exercise (see Abdominal Contraction). Perform each exercise for 60 seconds. The farther the ball is from your body, the harder the exercise.

Lying on Floor

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and calves resting on ball.
2. Slowly raise arm over head and lower arm, alternating right and left sides.
3. Slowly straighten one knee and relax, alternating right and left sides.
4. Slowly straighten one knee and raise opposite arm over head. Alternate opposite arms and legs.
5. Slowly "walk" ball forward and backward with legs.

Sitting on Ball

1. Sit on ball with hips and knees bent 90° and feet resting on floor.
2. Slowly raise arm over head and lower arm, alternating right and left sides.
3. Slowly raise and lower heel, alternating right and left sides.
4. Slowly raise one heel and raise opposite arm over head. Alternate opposite arm and heel.
5. Marching: Slowly raise one foot 2 inches from floor, alternating right and left sides.

Standing

1. Stand with ball between your low back and wall.
2. Slowly bend knees 45 ° to 90 ° . Hold 5 seconds. Straighten knees.
3. Slowly bend knees 45 ° to 90 ° while raising both arms over head.

Lying on Ball

1. Lie on your stomach over ball
2. Slowly raise alternate arms over head.
3. Slowly raise alternate legs 2 to 4 inches from floor.
4. Combine 1 and 2, alternating opposite arms and legs.
5. Bend one knee. Slowly lift this leg up, alternating right and left legs.

NOTE: Be careful not to arch your low back!

Advanced Exercise Program

Hip Flexor Stretch

1. Lie on your back near edge of bed, holding knees to chest.
2. Slowly lower one leg down, keeping knee bent, until a stretch is felt across top of the hip/thigh.
3. Hold 20 seconds.
4. Relax.
5. Repeat 5 times on each side.

Piriformis Stretch

1. Lie on back with both knees bent.
2. Cross one leg on top of the other.
3. Pull opposite knee to chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock/hip area.
4. Hold 20 seconds.
5. Relax.
6. Repeat 5 times each side.

Lumbar Stabilization Exercise with Swiss Ball

1. Lie on stomach over ball.
2. "Walk" hands out in front of ball until ball is under legs. Reverse to starting position.
3. "Walk" hands out in front of ball until ball is under legs and slowly raise alternating arms over head.
4. "Walk" hands out in front of ball and slowly perform push-ups.

Aerobic Exercises

Maintain spine in neutral position while stabilizing with abdominal muscles to protect the low back during aerobic exercise.

- Stationary bike for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Treadmill for 20 to 30 minutes.