Stretches for Your Back

Stretching exercises can help reduce lower back pain. Do the exercises slowly and smoothly for the best results. Be sure to breathe while you exercise. Holding your breath can put extra stress on your heart.

These stretches are all done on the floor or a study table. An exercise mat can be used and a small pillow or towel under your head can provide support and comfort.

Do the exercises ___ times a day as your therapist, doctor or nurse recommends for you.

- **Knee to chest (Lumbar flexion)**
  1. Lie on your back with legs out straight.
  2. Bring your right leg up to your chest. Use your hands behind your knee to help pull your knee to your chest.
  3. Lower your leg to the start position and repeat with the left leg.
  4. Do ___ sets of 20 repeats. Rest for a minute between sets.

- **Hip rolls (Lumbar rotation)**
  1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Your shoulders should be flat on the floor.

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2. Keep your knees together and move your knees to the right as far as you can, keeping your shoulders on the floor.

3. Bring your knees back up and then move them to the left as far as you can, keeping your shoulders on the floor.

4. Bring your knees back up to the start position and repeat.

5. Do ___ sets of 20 repeats. Rest for a minute between sets.

Hamstring stretch – supine

1. Lie on your back and bend your left knee up. Your right leg should be flat on the floor.

2. Grab your left leg behind your knee and pull your knee towards your chest.

3. Straighten your leg towards the ceiling and hold for 30 seconds.

4. Bend the knee back down and then lower your leg so it is flat on the floor.

5. Repeat with your other leg.

6. Do ___ sets of 10 repeats. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds between sets.

Knee to side (Supine piriformis stretch with hip flexion)

1. Lie on your back and bend your left knee up. Your right leg should be flat on the floor through this stretch.

2. With your right hand on your left knee, bring your knee up to your chest.

3. Use your left hand on your lower leg and gently pull your leg across your body until you feel a stretch deep in your buttocks.

4. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and then turn your leg back to center and lower your leg.
5. Repeat with the other leg.
6. Do ___ sets of 10 repeats. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds between sets.

- **Cat and Camel stretch**
  1. Start on your hands and knees with your head forward and your back relaxed. Hands should be under your shoulders.
  2. Tuck your chin in towards your chest, tighten your stomach muscles and round your back up like a cat stretching.
  3. Then slowly lower your back and bring your head back up to the start position.
  4. Do ___ sets of 10 repeats. Rest for a minute between sets.

- **Kneeling stretch**
  1. Start on your knees, sitting back on your heels, arms at your sides.
  2. Bend your head down towards your chin while bending your trunk forward.
  3. Reach forward with your hands on the floor and hold for 20 to 30 seconds.
  4. Pull your trunk back up to the starting position.
  5. Do ____ sets of 10 repeats. Rest for a minute between sets.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.