



A cooperative program of the  
ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION and PFIZER

## Exercises for Low-Back Pain

Low-back pain will strike 80% of Americans in their lifetime. The good news is that more than 90% of the time, people can get better by following the simple advice below.

### Daily Activity Tips

Avoid sudden spurts of strenuous activity. Regular, moderate levels of exercise are best. Push, pull, or roll heavy items instead of carrying them. If you must carry heavy items, hold them close to your body or distribute their weight evenly in both hands. Sit while performing stationary activities, such as preparing your food. If you need to stand at the sink, open the cabinet door beneath the sink and put one foot inside to transfer some of the pressure from your back to your leg. When walking or standing, stand up straight. Posture is very important.

Remember that the more shock you can absorb by wearing correct shoes, the less shock your spine has to take. Therefore, wear rubber or crepe soles when out walking. Women should avoid high heels because high heels change the alignment of the spine, putting extra pressure on the joints, nerves, and muscles.

### Special Concerns

Be sure to report to your doctor any back pain that (1) starts or gets worse at night; (2) travels into the buttocks or legs; (3) is accompanied by numbness, tingling, or "falling asleep" sensations in the legs; or (4) is accompanied by weakness in the legs or thinning of the leg muscles.

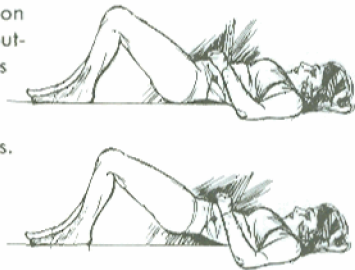
### Exercise Tips

Regular exercise and adequate rest help to keep your spine healthy. Exercises strengthen and condition muscles, promote flexibility, and improve posture. Your doctor has evaluated and diagnosed your back pain and may be treating you with medication, rest, and selected exercises or physical therapy.

On the reverse side are six exercises specially designed for the lower back. Do your exercises each morning and more often if recommended by your doctor or physical therapist. Begin with 5 repetitions per exercise and gradually increase to 20 repetitions. Never hold your breath while exercising. To avoid holding your breath, you might try counting out loud. Follow the directions precisely. If the exercises make you extremely tired or cause pain lasting more than 2 hours, contact your doctor or physical therapist, who may decide to modify your exercise program with additional or different exercises.

### Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Tighten your buttocks and roll your pelvis up so as to flatten your upper back against the floor. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.



### Double Knee Pull

Lie on your back with both knees bent, feet flat. Bring one knee up, then the other, pulling both to your chest until you feel a stretching in your buttocks. Bring your forehead to your knees and hold for 5 seconds. Put one foot down, then the other. Rest and repeat.



### Back Erector

Stand up straight. Bring your chest out, shoulders back (military style). Hold for 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.



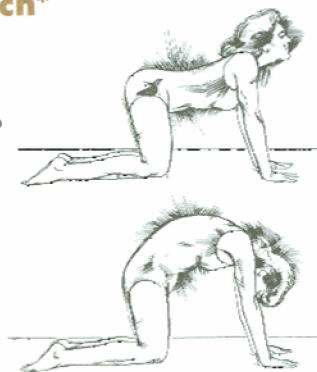
### Half Sit-up

Lie with knees bent, arms at your side. Reach for knees, raising head and shoulders off the floor, and continue to breathe. Relax to initial position.



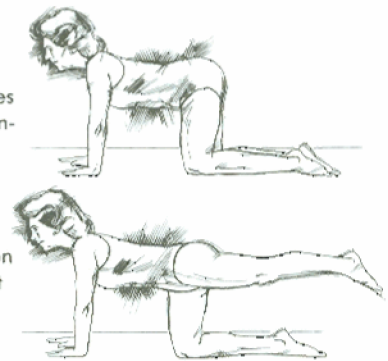
### Angry Cat Stretch\*

Kneel on hands and knees as illustrated. Arch your back up like an angry cat. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.



### Hip Kicker\*

Kneel on hands and knees as illustrated. While maintaining a straight back, slowly raise one leg out behind you. Hold for 5 seconds, then return the leg to the floor. Repeat on opposite side. As you get stronger, you may add a small cuff weight to the ankle.



\* Patients diagnosed by their physicians as having a ruptured disk or spondylolisthesis should refrain from these two exercises.

Individualized Patient Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Arthritis Foundation disclaims any liability for loss, personal or otherwise, resulting from the exercises on this handout.



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