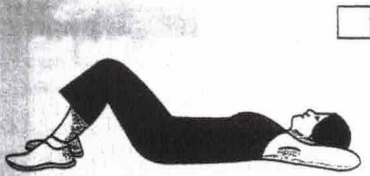


## EXERCISES FOR LOW BACK PAIN

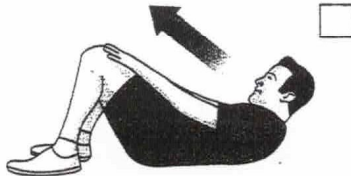
To prevent recurrences and reduce the severity and duration of low back pain episodes, it's important that you keep your back muscles, ligaments, joints and discs healthy. Your doctor can help you ease into exercise with slow-movement and low-impact activities.<sup>4</sup> Your doctor has selected those exercises that are specific to your needs. He or she has also informed you how often, and for how long, each exercise should be repeated. Always discuss any changes to your exercise routine with your doctor before making them. Through proper exercise, you can strengthen and restore your back.

### Exercises to strengthen your back



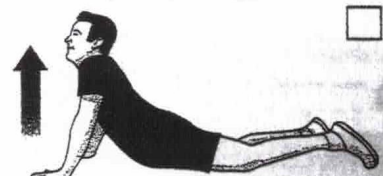
#### Pelvic tilt<sup>6</sup>

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles and push your lower back into the floor. Hold for five seconds, and then relax.



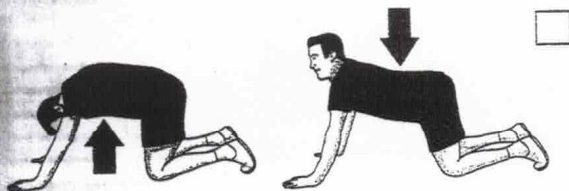
#### Partial curl<sup>6</sup>

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Flatten your back against the floor, tighten your stomach muscles and tuck your chin into your chest. Stretch your arms out in front of you and curl your upper body forward until your shoulders come off the floor. Breathe out as you come up and hold this position for 3 seconds.



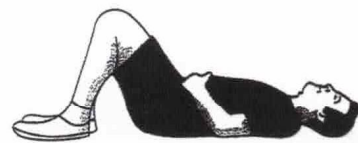
#### Back extension<sup>7</sup>

Lie down on your stomach and place your hands on the floor near the sides of your head. In one smooth motion, push your upper body off the floor by straightening your arms, keeping your hips on the floor. Try to hold this position for 10 seconds, relax your arms, and move back toward the floor.



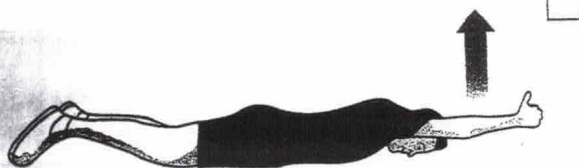
#### Cat and camel stretch<sup>5</sup>

Begin this stretch on your hands and knees, with your neck parallel to the floor. By slightly contracting your abdominal and buttock muscles, arch your back upwards. Try to hold this position for 5-10 seconds. Then, gently let your back drop toward the floor while keeping your arms straight, and feel the stretch for another 5-10 seconds. It's important to keep your weight evenly distributed over your body to avoid putting more pressure on any one part. This exercise strengthens back and abdominal muscles.



#### Abdominal contractions<sup>9</sup>

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your hands resting below your ribs. Tighten your abdominal muscles to squeeze your ribs downwards. Be sure not to hold your breath. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax.



#### Arm lifts<sup>8</sup>

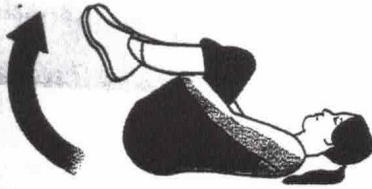
Lie down on your stomach and stretch your arms over your head and slightly out to the side. Position your right hand so that your thumb points upwards, and lift. Slowly lower your arm. During this stretch you should remember to keep your thighs and your left arm relaxed. Raise your other arm in the same manner.



#### Prone hip extension<sup>6</sup>

Lie down on your stomach, tighten up your buttock muscles and start lifting your left leg off the floor, about 4-8 inches, while keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 5-10 seconds and then lower your leg. Repeat with your other leg.

## Exercises to strengthen your back



### Knee-to-chest stretch<sup>5</sup>

Start this exercise by lying on your back with your knees bent and your heels flat on the floor. Place both your hands behind your left knee, and gradually pull it into your chest until you feel a comfortable stretch in your lower back. Hold the stretch for 5 seconds and return your left leg to the starting position. This exercise stretches the hips, buttocks, and lower back.



### Hamstring stretch<sup>9</sup>

Lie on your back with your legs bent. With both your hands, hold your left thigh behind the knee. Slowly straighten your knee until you feel a stretch in the back of your thigh. Hold for 20 seconds and then release your leg. Repeat with your other leg.



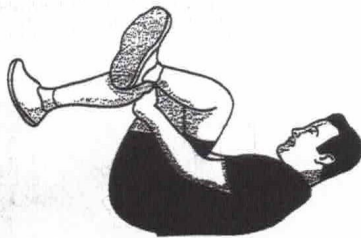
### Backward bending<sup>9</sup>

Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees straight. Place your hands on your back firmly at waist level. Gently bend backwards at your waist, keeping the knees as straight as possible. Hold for 3 seconds and slowly return to the upright position.



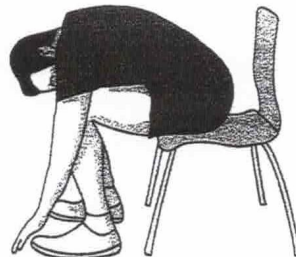
### Side bending<sup>9</sup>

With your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees slightly bent, and your arms by your side, reach your left arm up and over your head. Gently lean toward your right side until you feel a stretch and hold for 3 seconds. Slowly bring your arm back to the starting position. Repeat exercise leaning the opposite way.



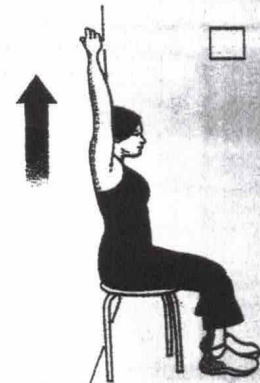
### Piriformis muscle stretch<sup>7</sup>

To stretch this muscle, which runs through the buttock, lie on your back and cross your right leg over the left one. Gently pull the left knee toward the chest until a stretch is felt in the buttock area. And then, slowly release your knee. This exercise stretches your inner legs and hips.



### Full back release<sup>9</sup>

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Relax your shoulders and your neck, and keep your head level. Slowly, curl forward with your neck, upper back and lower back. Reach toward the floor and try to get your palms to touch the floor. Hold for 5 seconds. Straighten up slowly so that you bring your head up last.



### Upper back stretch<sup>8</sup>

Sit on a stool with your back flat against a wall. Lift your arms overhead and keep your head and back flat against the wall. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Now try to press your shoulders against the wall while keeping your back flat, and hold for another 5-10 seconds. Lower your hands to the starting position.