

Exercises for Chronic Back Pain

This strengthening and stretching program will help lessen your pain, and get you stronger and more flexible, so you can do the activities you enjoy with less pain and effort. Choose a time of day that best fits your daily routine. Please talk with your primary care provider or physical therapist if you have questions or concerns.

Strengthening

1. Partial curl up

- a. Lie on your back on a bed or a mat on the floor.
- b. Bend your knees and keep them hip distance apart.
- c. Cross your arms over your chest.
- d. Tighten your abdominal muscles and bring your shoulders and head off the mat or bed.
- e. Slowly lower back to the start position.



Tips

- Pick a spot on the ceiling and watch it to keep your head and neck in a good position.
- Lift your head, neck and shoulder blades off the floor as a unit.
- Hold your arms straight with your fingertips toward your knees to make it easier.
- Put your fingertips by your ears and elbows out to the side to make it harder.

Repetitions	Number of Sets	Days per Week
10	3	3 to 5

2. Bridging

- Lie on your back on a bed or mat on the floor.
- Bend your knees and keep them hip distance apart.
- Rest your hands at your sides.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles and buttocks.
- Push into your heels and raise your buttocks off the floor/bed to make a bridge.



Tip

Keep your pelvis in neutral position during the exercise. Do not arch or flatten your back.

Repetitions	Number of Sets	Days per Week
10	3	3 to 5

Stretching

1. Lower trunk rotation stretch

- Lie on your back on a bed or mat on the floor.
- Bend your knees and put your feet together.
- Rest your hands at your sides.
- Keep your knees together.
- Rock your knees to one side until a gentle stretch is felt on the outside of your hip/back.
- Repeat the stretch on the opposite side.



Tip

Keep your hips on the bed or mat.

Hold	Repetitions	Days per Week
30 seconds	3	Daily

2. Hamstring stretch

Seated

- Sit on a sturdy chair on a non-slip floor.
- Bend one knee, putting your foot flat on the floor.
- Straighten your other leg, keeping your heel on the floor.
- Gently lean forward until a stretch is felt behind your straight knee/thigh.



Alternate position for hamstring stretch

- Lie on your back.
- Raise your leg and hold the back of your thigh until a stretch is felt behind your knee/thigh.



Tip

Tighten your stomach muscles to support your back as you do the exercise.

Hold	Repetitions	Days per Week
30 seconds	3	Daily

3. Seated forward bend stretch

- Sit on a sturdy chair on a non-slip floor.
- Put your knees and feet wide apart.
- Relax your arms inside your thighs.
- Gently bend forward reaching toward the floor until a gentle stretch is felt in your lower back.
- Go back to the starting position.



Tip

- Put your hands on your thighs when you bend forward.
- Breathe during the exercise.

Hold	Repetitions	Days per Week
30 seconds	3	Daily

