

Exercises to Strengthen Your Back

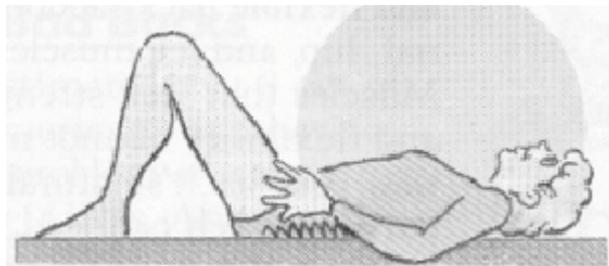
Your 15 Minute Workout

By doing your 15 minute workout 3-5 times per week, you can condition the muscles and joints that support your back and keep it in healthy balance throughout the day. Strengthening exercises help build strong muscles, while stretching exercises increase flexibility. Begin each group of exercises from the starting position indicated, and follow the sequence shown. Don't strain or rush. Relax and breathe.

Do not do any exercises that cause pain.

The Starting Position

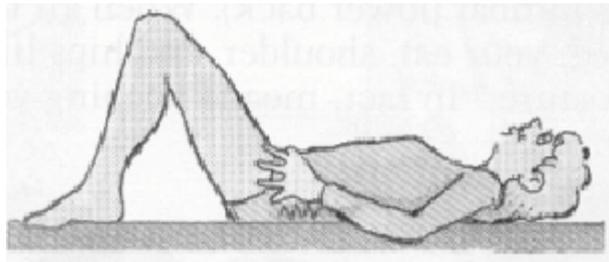
Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Try to feel your whole back on the floor. Breathe deeply, expand your lungs, and rest your hands on your pelvis. You should feel comfortable and relaxed.



Pelvic Tilt

This stretches the back muscles and strengthens the stomach muscles.

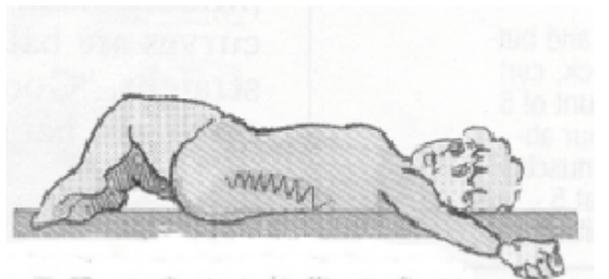
Tighten your abdomen and buttock muscles. Press your lower back onto the floor (a small and subtle movement). Hold 5 seconds, release. Repeat 8 times.



Lower Back Rotation

This stretches and strengthens the back rotation muscles.

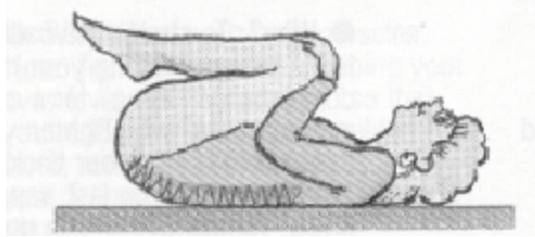
Drop both knees to one side while rotating your head to the opposite side. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat 8 times, alternating sides



Double Leg Pull

This stretches the lower back and buttock muscles.

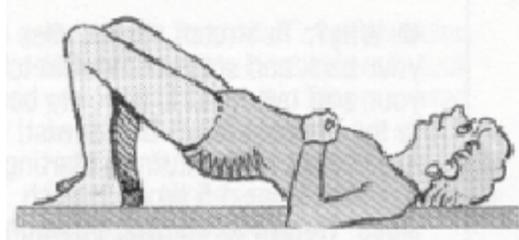
Gently pull both knees to your chest. Hold 5 seconds, then return to the start position. Repeat 8 times at first and build up to 20 repetitions.



Hip Lift

Strengthens the buttock muscles.

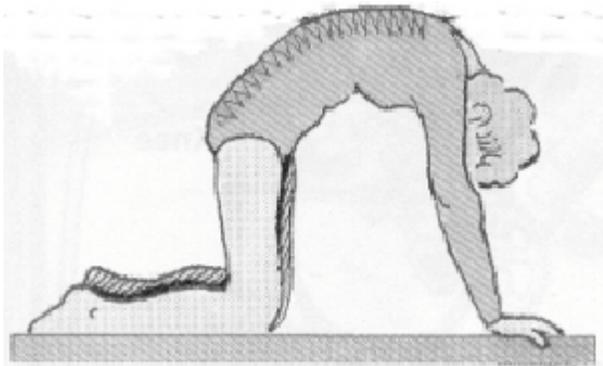
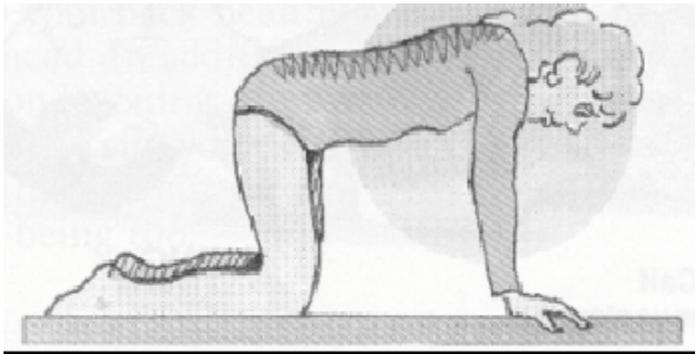
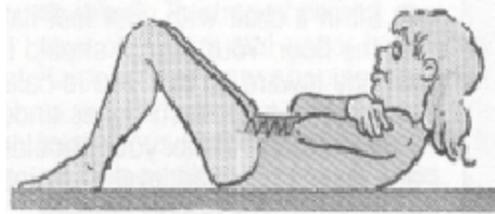
Without arching your back, slowly raise your hips upward. Make it a straight line from knees to shoulders. Hold for 5, lower, repeat 8 times.



Partial Curl ups

Strengthens abdominal muscles.

Cross your arms loosely, and tuck your chin in. Tighten your abdomen and curl halfway up directly in front of you. Hold for 5, curl down, repeat 8 times.



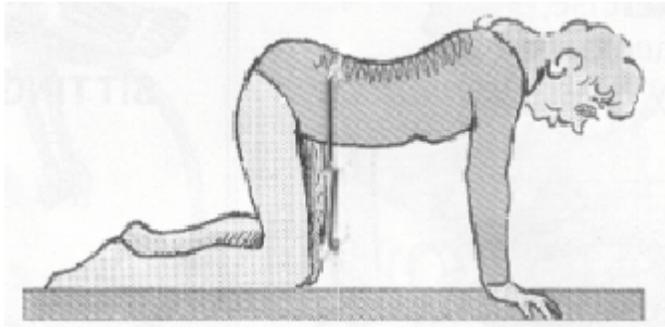
Starting Position

On your hands and knees, keep your knees directly under your hips and your hands directly under your shoulders. Keep the abdomen slightly firm, so your spine stays in neutral. Keep your neck relaxed in its natural curve so that your ears are aligned with your shoulders.

Back Press

This exercise strengthens abdominal muscles and buttocks and stretches your back.

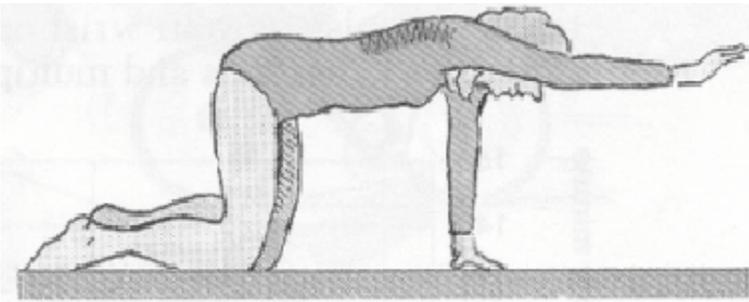
Press your back upward by tightening your abdominal and buttock muscles at the same time. Allow your head to drop slightly keeping your hands and knees still. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times.



Back Release

This stretches your back muscles.

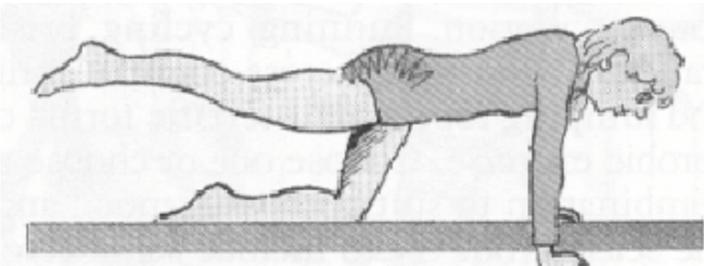
Allow your stomach and the muscles of your buttocks to relax and let your back sag. Be sure to keep your weight evenly distributed; don't sit back on your hips. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times.



Arm Reach

Strengthens your shoulders and upper back.

Stretch one arm straight out in front of you. Don't raise your head and don't let your back sag. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times. Alternate arms.



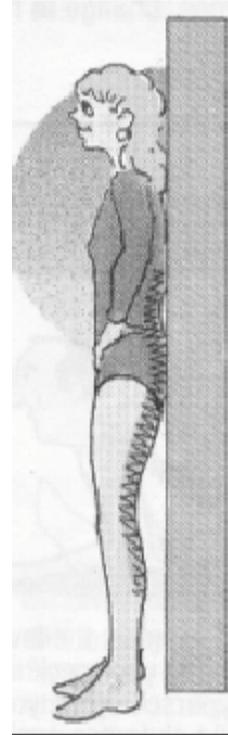
Leg Reach

Strengthens the muscles of your buttocks.

Extend one leg straight out behind you and hold it parallel to the floor for a count of 5. Don't let your head, back or stomach sag, and try not to arch your back. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times. Alternate legs.

Starting Position

Stand with your hips and buttocks slightly tucked under and your shoulders relaxed. Your feet should be slightly apart and directly under your hips. Keep your eyes and chin level, focus directly in front of you. Use your stomach and buttock muscles to do a slight pelvic tilt. Standing, feel all three curves of your spine balanced in neutral.



Wall Slide

Strengthens the back, hip, and leg muscles.

With your back against the wall, legs slightly apart, sink straight down slowly as if sitting in a chair. Be sure not to lose your neutral curves. Hold for 5 seconds, slowly slide back up. Repeat 5 times. As you get stronger, try to hold for 1 minute.



Calf Stretch

Stretches the calf muscles.

Feet slightly apart, bend your front leg, keeping the heel of your back foot firmly on the floor. Lean forward and grasp a chair, or table. Hold 30 seconds, switch legs.



Hamstring Stretch

Stretches the hamstrings and lower back.

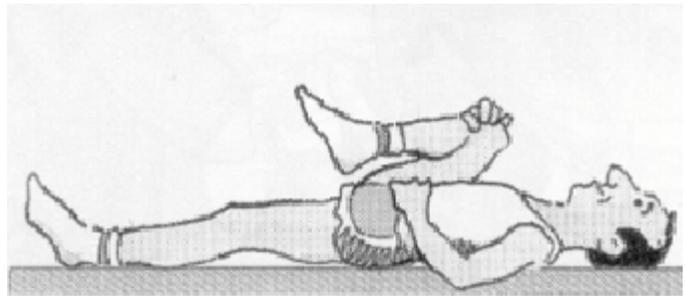
Put 1 foot up on a chair. Keep the elevated leg and back straight, bend forward slowly as if trying to meet your knee with your head. Hold for 5 seconds, do 8 times. Switch legs.



Single Leg Pull

Stretches the hip, lower back and buttock muscles.

Slowly pull a bent knee to your chest while keeping the other knee and the lower back pressed against the floor. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times. Remember to breathe and relax.



Straight Leg Raise

Stretches the hips and hamstring muscles, and strengthens the quadriceps muscles.

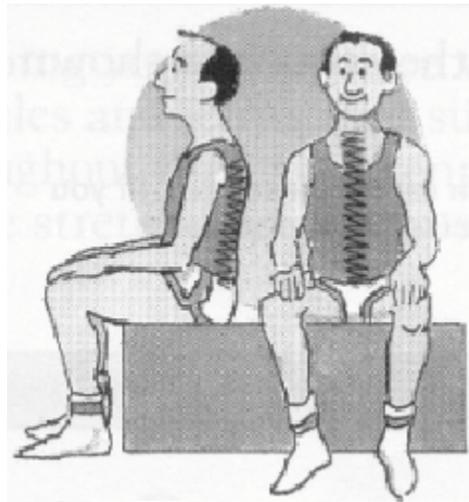
Keeping your lower back pressed against the floor, raise the straight leg until its level with the bent knee. Hold for 5 seconds, return to the start position, do 8 times. Switch legs.



Starting Position

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Your weight should be slightly forward so that you are balanced on the 2 prominent bones under your buttocks.

Relax your shoulders and keep your head level to maintain all 3 natural curves.



Side Stretch

Stretches the muscles in your back and side.

Stretch your arm overhead and slowly bend to the opposite side. Don't twist.

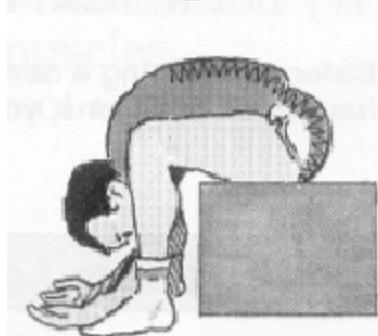
Hold 5 seconds, return to start. Repeat 8 times. Switch sides.



Full Back Release

Stretches the back and buttock muscles.

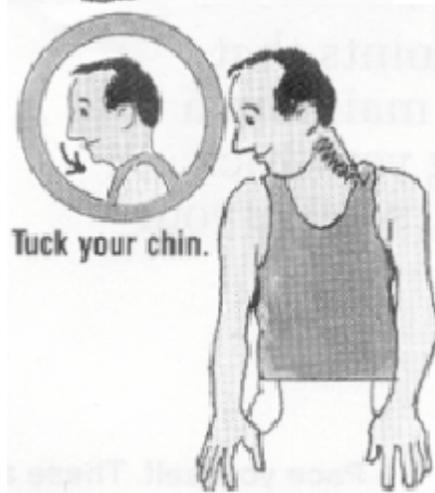
Relaxing your neck, curl down slowly. "Hang" for a count of 5 and curl up slowly. Tighten your abdominals and use your back muscles. Bring your head up last. Repeat 8 times. Return to start.



Neck Turn

Stretches the neck muscles.

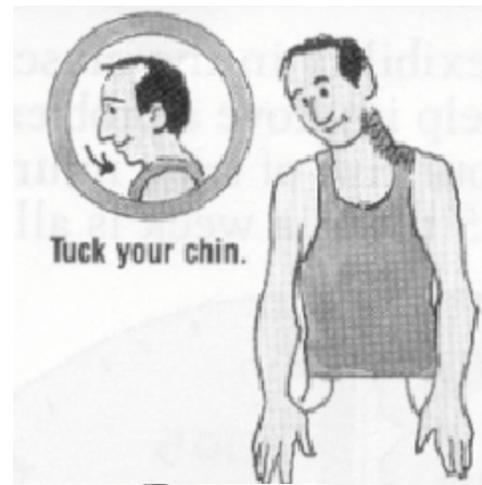
Tuck your chin in, keeping your eyes level, rotate your head so that you are looking over 1 shoulder. Hold for 5. Return to start. Do 8 times. Switch sides.



Neck Tilt

Stretches the neck muscles.

With shoulders relaxed, tuck your chin in slightly. Tilt your head so that your ear is over your shoulder. Hold for 5. Return to start. Repeat 8 times, switch sides.



Shoulder Shrug

Stretches and strengthens the shoulder and upper back muscles.

Raise both of your shoulders as high as you can, as if you were trying to touch your ears. Hold for 5, return to start. Repeat 8 times.

