

# Lower Back Exercises and Stretches



These simple stretches and strength-building exercises can help support your back. Be sure to breathe normally while you hold these positions. If you're experiencing back pain, consult your doctor before doing these exercises.

## Elbow Plank

Lay on the floor. Place your elbows on the ground, directly under your shoulders. Bend your toes under and lift your straightened body into a "plank" by tightening your buttocks and abdominal muscles and tilting your pelvis forward. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally. Increase time to one-minute intervals as you get stronger!



## Modified Cobra\*

Lay on the floor. Place hands under your shoulders and slowly arch your head and chest upward until you can place your elbows on the floor. Leave your hip bones/pelvis on the floor. It helps to slightly tighten your buttocks. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.



## Knee to Chest

Lay on your back. At the same time, pull in your knees and lift your head toward your knees. Support your legs with your hands behind your knees. Hold the position for 30 second intervals while breathing normally.



## Reclining Big Toe / Hamstring Stretch

Lay on your back. Bend your knees, with feet flat on the floor. Lift one leg straight up – holding behind the knee, gently stretch toward your head. Hold for 30 seconds while breathing normally. Repeat with other leg.

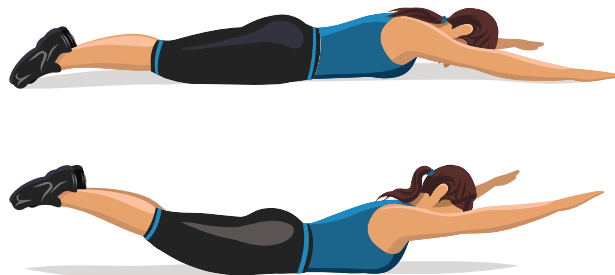
For a greater challenge, try this stretch without bending your knees.



\*Note: Use caution when first trying this position if you're sedentary or not used to exercising.

### **Superman\***

Lay on your stomach. At the same time, lift both legs and raise your arms, head and torso off the floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.

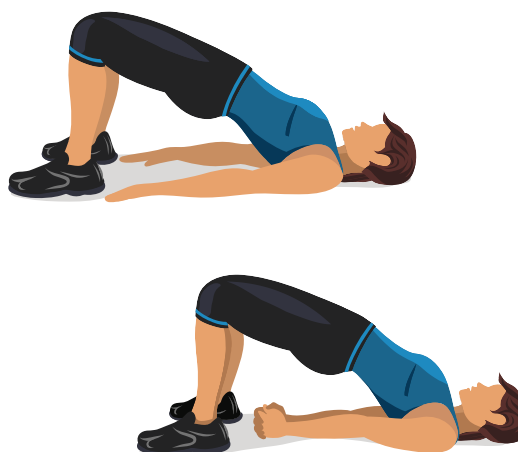


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### **Bridge Modified and Bridge**

Lay on your back with your arms by your side. Place both feet on the floor, with knees bent. Tighten your abdominal muscles and tilt your pelvis up toward your belly button, rounding out your lower back. Squeeze buttocks muscles as you lift your buttocks off the floor. Work to keep the front of your body in a straight line from knees to shoulders. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.

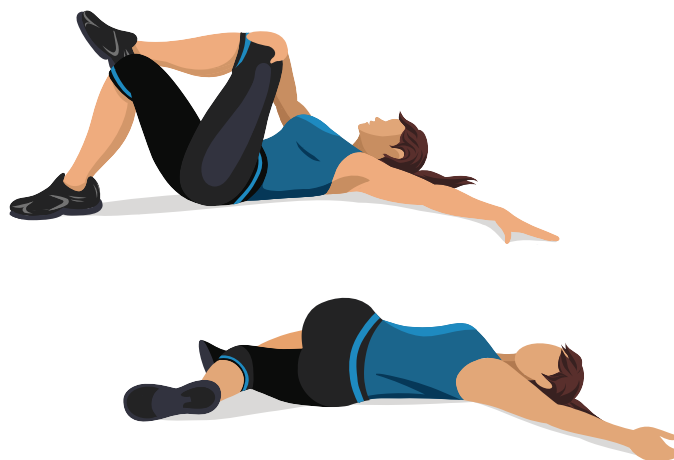
For a greater challenge, bring both hands under your body and clasp hands while you're in the raised "bridge" position.



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### **Supine (Lying) Spinal Twist\***

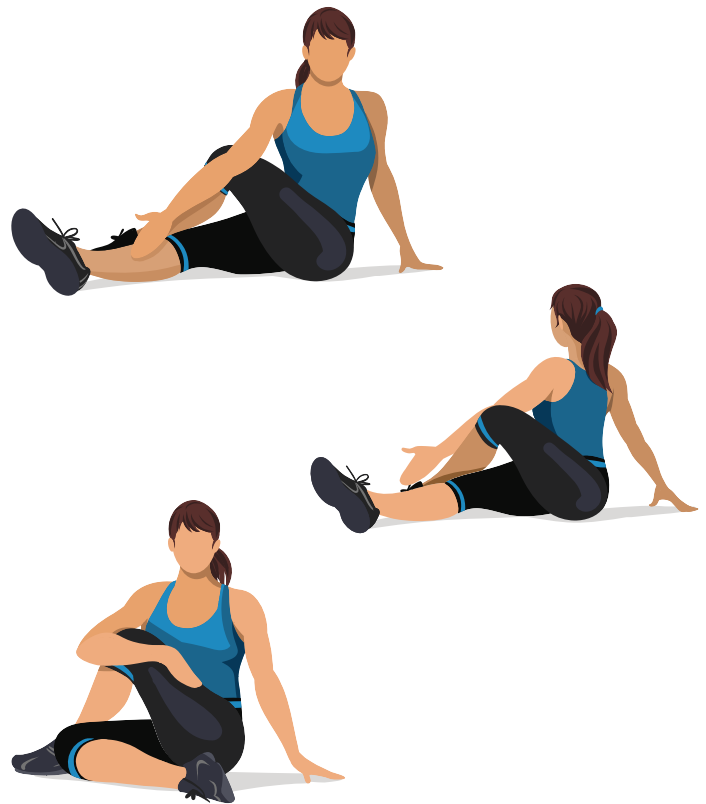
Lay on your back with your arms outstretched in a T. Bend both legs and put your feet on the floor. Lift one foot and place on the other knee. Then gently drop both legs toward the floor, so your lifted leg is on top. Your shoulders should remain on the floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally. Gently return to center, rest, then repeat move on the second side.



### Seated Spinal Twist

Sit on the floor with your legs extended. Bend one knee, placing that foot across the other leg. Bring your opposite arm to the outside of your bent knee using that arm as a brace, gently twist your body so that your shoulders are as close as possible to the line of your straight leg. Gently return to center. Then turn in the opposite direction, now using the other arm as leverage against your bent knee. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.

You can also do this twist with your bottom leg folded instead of straight on the floor.

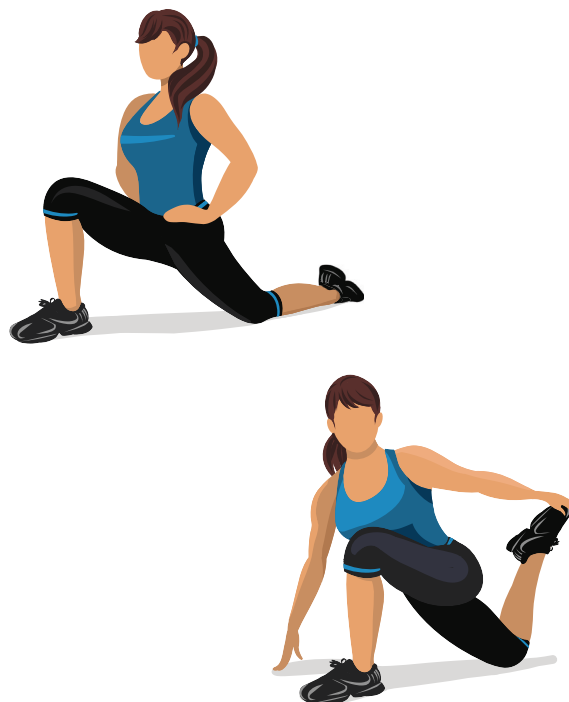


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### Hip Flexor Stretch

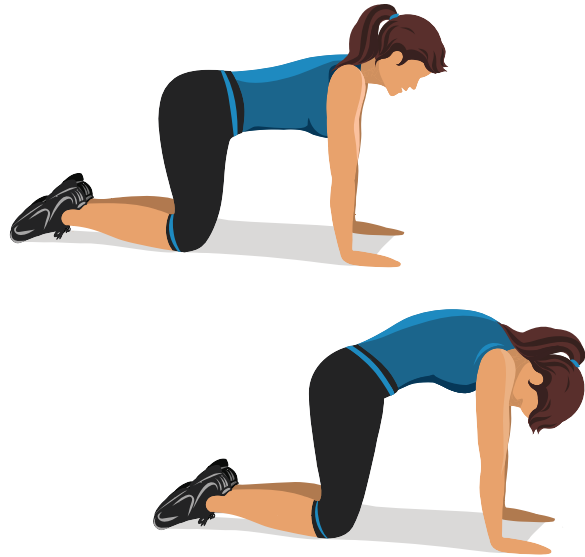
Kneel on the floor, with your torso over your hips. Bring one leg forward with the knee bent and your foot on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles while pulling your pelvis up towards your belly button to stabilize your low back. Gently lunge forward until you feel the stretch in your back leg. Don't allow your low back to arch. Return to center, put both knees down, then bring opposite leg forward and stretch. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.

For a greater challenge, reach back to the leg on the floor and raise that foot with your hand.



### Arch Stretch (Cat)

Put your hands and knees on the floor, with your knees under your hips and hands under your shoulders. Gently round your back toward the sky, tucking your head toward your chest. Stretch your spine up like a cat. Feel your back expanding upward and outward. Slowly return to the original position. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.



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### Slump Stretch (Cow)

Put your hands and knees on the floor, with your knees under your hips and hands under your shoulders. Let your belly sag toward the floor and lift your head up. Feel your entire spine curve downward, like an old cow. Slowly return to the original position. Hold for 20-30 seconds while breathing normally.

