

# Lower Back

## EXERCISES AND STRETCHES

Try these simple stretches and strength-building moves designed to support your back and relieve pain.

Created by MyLifeStages Fitness Expert Sandra Augustin, Owner of Fitness Rehab in Sacramento, California  
Photography provided by D and M Studios.

### 1 ELBOW PLANK



Laying on the floor, place elbows on the ground, directly under shoulders, forearms extended on the floor. Bend toes under and lift your straightened body into the “plank” by tightening the buttocks and abdominal muscles and tilting the pelvis forward. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally. Increase time to one minute intervals as you get stronger!

### 2 MODIFIED COBRA



NOTE: This position should be approached with caution if you are sedentary or not used to exercising.

Laying on the floor, place hands under shoulders and slowly arch the head and chest upward till you can place your elbows on the floor. Leave the hip bones/pelvis on the floor. It helps to slightly tighten the buttocks. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

### 3 KNEE TO CHEST



Laying on your back, simultaneously pull in your knees and lift your head toward your knees. Support your legs with your hands behind the knees. Hold position for 30 second intervals while breathing.

---

## 4 RECLINING BIG TOE/ HAMSTRING STRETCH



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

A more challenging version is to lay flat on the floor (without bending knees) and do the leg lift and stretch, one leg at a time.

---

## 5 SUPERMAN



NOTE: This position should be approached with caution if you are sedentary or not used to exercising.

Laying on your stomach, simultaneously lift both legs and raise your arms, head, and torso off the floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

---

## 6 BRIDGE MODIFIED & BRIDGE



Laying on your back with arms by your side, place both feet on the floor, knees bent. Tighten abdominal muscles and tilt pelvis up toward belly button, rounding out low 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. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

A more challenging version is to bring both hands under the body and clasp hands while you are in the raised “bridge” position.

---

---

## 7 SUPINE (LYING) SPINAL TWIST



NOTE: This position should be approached with caution if you are sedentary or not used to exercising.

Laying on your back with 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. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

Gently return to center, rest, then repeat move on the second side.

---

## 8 SEATED SPINAL TWIST



Sit on the floor with legs extended and 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. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

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

---

## 9 HIP FLEXOR STRETCH



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

A more challenging pose is to reach back to the leg on the floor and raise that foot with your hand.

---

---

## 10 ARCH STRETCH (CAT)



Put hands and knees on the floor – knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Gently round your back toward the sky, tucking your head toward your chest – stretching your spine up like a cat. Feel your back expanding upward and outward. Slowly return to the original position. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

---

## 11 SLUMP STRETCH (COW)



Put hands and knees on the floor – knees under hips and hands under shoulders. Let your belly sag toward the floor and your head lift up. Feel your entire spine curve downward, like an old cow. Slowly return to the original position. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Do not hold your breath, but breathe normally.

---