

Keep your back strong and healthy

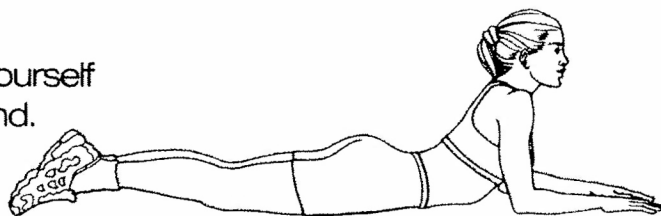
Exercises to help prevent back pain

Muscle spasms of the back can be very painful. Although medicine (including muscle relaxants) can ease the pain and relax tight muscles, it cannot stop spasms from returning. Improving flexibility and increasing strength of your back muscles are excellent ways to avoid future injuries and help you feel better as well. Remember, **start slowly** and increase repetitions as you feel stronger and more comfortable with the exercises.

NOTE: Your health care professional may recommend some or all of these exercises. Ask him or her which ones are appropriate. Discontinue any exercises that cause pain immediately and contact your health care professional.

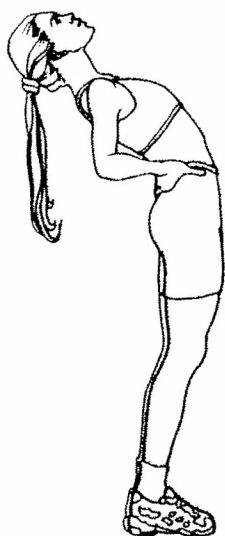
❑ STRETCH 1

Lie face down on a mat, rug, or towel. Prop yourself up on bent elbows, forearms flat on the ground. Count slowly to 3, then relax with your elbows down. Repeat 5 times.



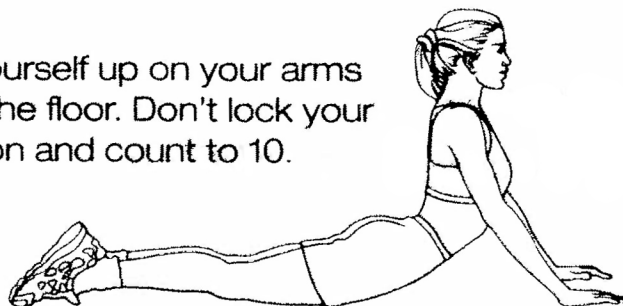
❑ STRETCH 2

Place your palms on your lower back and slowly bend back while standing, to the point where you begin to feel a slight tension in the muscles. Hold your position and slowly count to 3. Then slowly stand straight and relax. Repeat this stretch hourly.



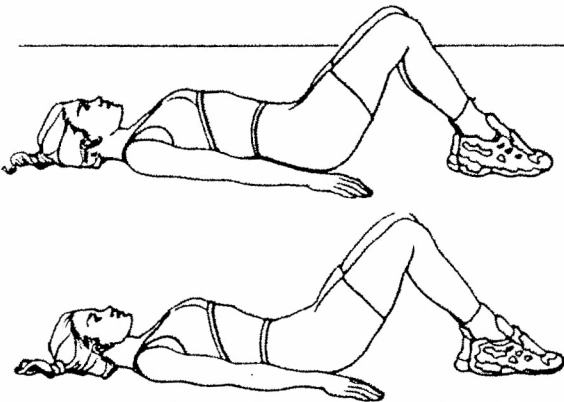
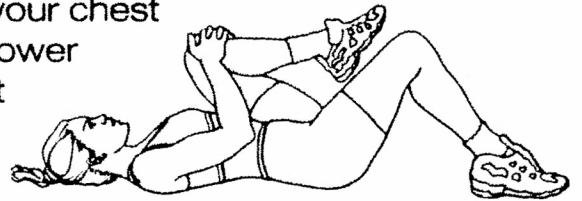
❑ STRETCH 3

As you lie face down, prop yourself up on your arms by pushing your hands onto the floor. Don't lock your arms straight. Hold the position and count to 10. Repeat the stretch 10 times.



❑ Knee hugs

Lie flat on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Press your lower back onto the floor so that there is no space between your back and the floor. Slowly raise one knee to your chest and hold it there with your hands for 5 seconds. Lower the knee slowly and perform the same movement with the other knee. Repeat the stretch 5 times, alternating knees.



❑ Pelvic tilt

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Pull your abdominal muscles in toward the floor and tilt your pelvis up. There should be no space between your back and the floor. Release the movement. Repeat the sequence 5 times.

❑ Standing hamstring stretch

While standing, bend your right knee and hip. Stretch your left leg out in front of you and lean forward while placing your hands on your right thigh for support. Now pull your left toes toward the ceiling and hold that position for 10 seconds. Repeat the same sequence on the other side. Do 5 repetitions with each leg.

