

SELF-HELP: PATIENT'S ADVICE

Simple core exercises [☆]

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Back, buttock and hip pain are very common symptoms. They are not usually due to anything serious, but they can be quite disabling. In certain instances they can persist and become a chronic problem. Active and inactive people alike suffer these symptoms as frequently as the common cold. People at particular risk include women after childbirth, sedentary individuals and those performing heavy or repetitive lifting and bending.

It is important if symptoms are not resolving quickly to see a health care provider and gain reassurance that there is no serious cause for the pain. Once this is done the best course of action is to gradually resume normal activities. Some of these may be uncomfortable, but that is normal and it is important to get things going again.

Muscle imbalances such as with tight muscles in the hip region and weak "core" muscles through the abdomen and back are common. Simple exercises such as those shown here can aid your recovery, enhance your stability and even prevent the severity of recurrences.

Hip stretches

(a) Sitting (see Fig. 1)

- Start by sitting on a chair and crossing one foot over the opposite knee.
- Then lean forward from your hips by arching your back.
- You should feel a strong stretch in the back of your hip and into your buttocks.
- Hold this stretch for a few seconds breathing normally as you do this.
- Ease off the stretch and then gently back on for 8–10 repetitions.

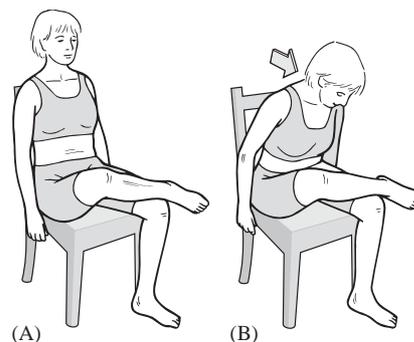


Figure 1 Seated hip stretch (A) start position (B) stretch.

(b) Lying (see Fig. 2)

- Lie on your back with 1 foot against a wall or door.
- Your knee should be bent around 90°.
- Cross your other foot over the knee.
- Place both your hands over your knee and then hug that knee towards your opposite shoulder.
- Hold this for a few seconds and repeat slowly for 8–10 repetitions.
- Be sure to breathe normally during the stretching procedure.

Core exercise

1st Phase (Figs. 3A and B)

- Lie on your back with your knees bent.
- Cross one leg over the other at the knee.
- Drop both legs to the floor on the side of the lower leg.

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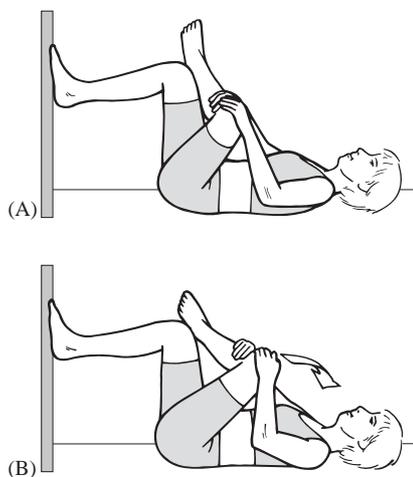


Figure 2 Lying hip stretch (A) start position (B) stretch.

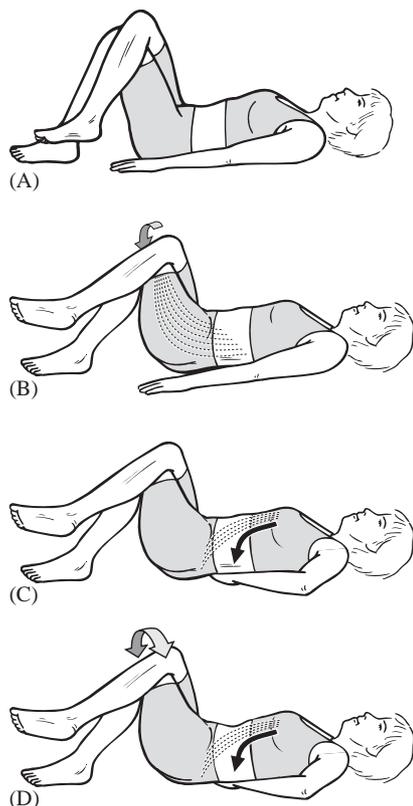


Figure 3 Core exercise: (A) start position; (B) low back stretch; (C) initial core abdominal activation. Advanced core abdominal training.

- You should feel a stretch in your lower back on opposite side.
- Perform this stretch a few times as a warm-up and then hold the stretch gently.

2nd Phase (Fig. 3C)

- Maintaining a light stretch place your hand under your arched low back.
- Try to flatten your low back without moving your knees very much.
- You should feel this in your abdomen.
- Try this a few times until you can actually feel that your rib cage is turning in the opposite direction to that in which where your knees and legs are positioned.
- Hold your back flat with your knees rotated to one side.
- Breathe normally throughout this exercise.

3rd Phase (Fig. 3D)

- Holding your back flat try to raise your knees back up.
- Then keeping your back flat slowly lower your knees part way towards the stretch position.
- Repeat this 8–10 times, being sure to keep pressure from your abdomen into the floor so that your back remains flat even while your knees and hips are turning in the opposite direction.
- You should breathe normally during this and feel your abdomen working.