

# Exercises to Rehabilitate and Strengthen the Low Back

**CAUTION**  
No exercise program should be undertaken without the approval, instruction and monitoring of your doctor or chiropractic.

Most low back pain patients experience three general stages before maximum recovery and rehabilitation is obtained:

1. Stage 1 — Acute/Pain Stage
2. Stage 2 — Subacute/Recovery Stage
3. Stage 3 — Chronic/Rehabilitative Stage

## Stage 1 — Acute Pain Stage (Signs and Symptoms)

- Low back pain
- Hip pain
- Leg pain
- Splinting muscle spasm
- Antalgic (bent) posture
- Muscle weakness
- Inability to stand on heels or toes
- Aggravated by sitting, standing, bending, coughing, sneezing, straining
- Difficulty in rising from a sitting or lying position

## Stage 2 — Subacute Recovery Stage

This stage is when the majority of your signs and symptoms from the acute stage have subsided. You may continue to experience a dull, aching sensation in your low back, hips or legs, and possibly have a weak feeling in the low back or a general feeling of apprehension. Standing straight, sitting and rising should be performed without pain. Sneezing and straining should not aggravate or cause you to have acute symptoms.

## Stage 3 — Chronic Rehabilitative Stage

You will reach this stage when all of your symptoms of the acute and subacute have subsided, or where maximum improvement in your condition has been obtained, and where long-term strengthening of the low back is absolutely essential.

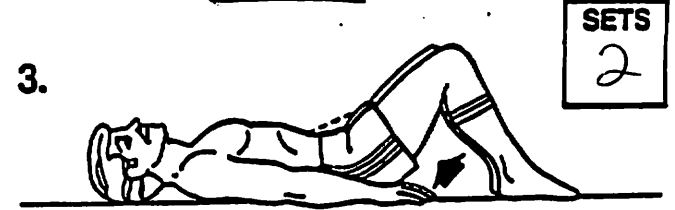
## Exercises — Acute/Pain Stage

★ TWICE DAILY -- One AM -- One PM

ON THE BED { unless you have a }  
waterbed.



1. Lie flat on the floor in a relaxed position. Bring your right knee toward your chest, clasping your hands around the knee. Pull your right knee toward your chest firmly and, at the same time, forcefully straighten the left leg. Hold for three to five seconds. Relax tension. Do five times. Repeat same procedure with opposite leg. Repeat five times or as recommended.



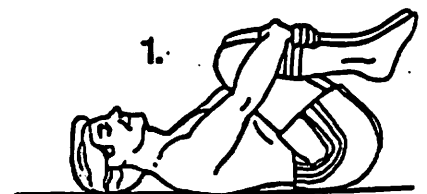
3. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor, hands at your sides, palms down. Tighten the muscles of your abdomen and buttocks so as to push your low back flat against the floor. Hold for three to five seconds, relax. Do five times or as recommended.

★ Remember — Pain ≠ gain!  
... stop any of these exercises if they cause you pain!



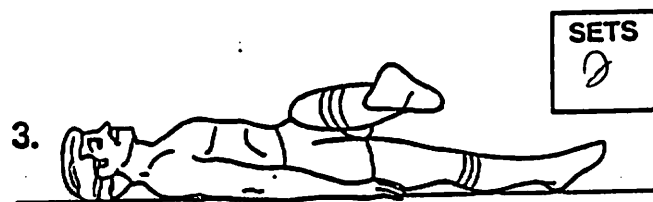
2. Lie on the floor with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor and arms at your sides, palms down. Tighten the muscles of your lower abdomen and buttocks so as to flatten your low back. Slowly raise low back and buttocks from the floor and hold for five seconds. Relax. Do five times or as recommended.

SETS  
2

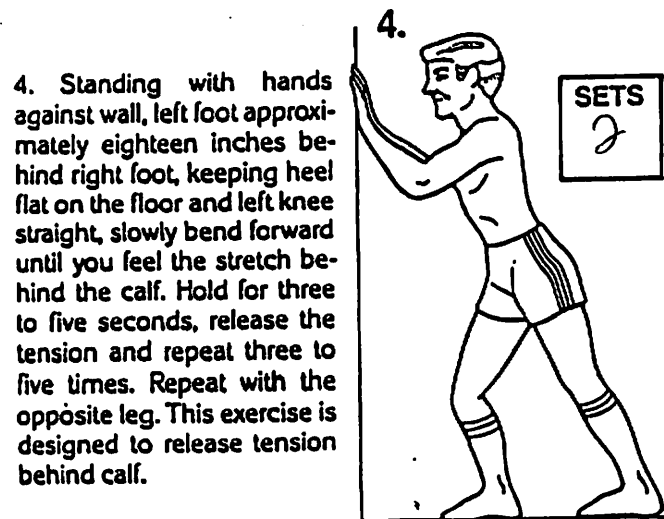


1. Lie on the floor with your knees bent, feet on the floor and arms at your sides. Bring both knees to chest, clasping hands around the knees and pulling firmly towards your chest. Hold for three to five seconds. Relax tension. Do five times or as recommended.

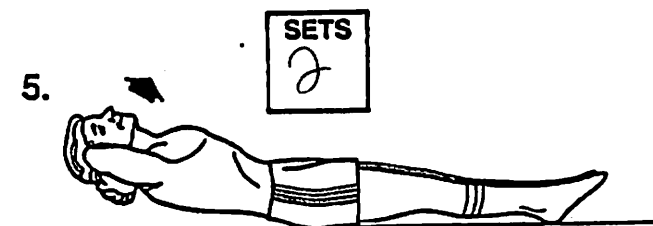
2. Lie on your back, your knees bent with feet flat on the floor, arms at your sides, palms down. Raise your left leg up as far as is comfortable without over-stretching muscles behind the leg. Return left leg to starting position and repeat five times. Repeat exercise with right leg. Do five times or as recommended.



3. Lie flat on your back, arms at your sides, palms down. Slowly raise one leg, bringing the raised leg toward the opposite side of the body until you feel the stretch. Return to neutral position. Repeat with opposite leg. Do five times or as recommended.



4. Standing with hands against wall, left foot approximately eighteen inches behind right foot, keeping heel flat on the floor and left knee straight, slowly bend forward until you feel the stretch behind the calf. Hold for three to five seconds, release the tension and repeat three to five times. Repeat with the opposite leg. This exercise is designed to release tension behind calf.

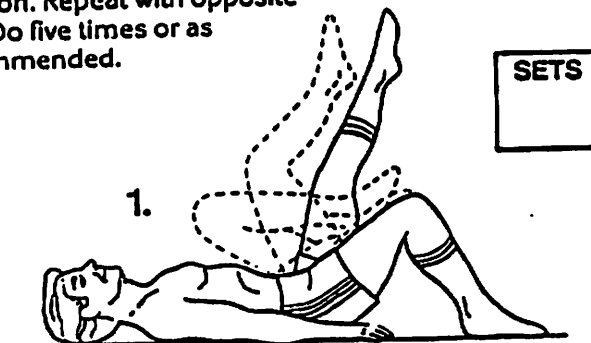


5. Lie flat on floor, hands clasped behind the neck. Tighten buttocks and at the same time, lift head and shoulders 2-4 inches off the floor without pulling on the neck. Hold for three to five seconds, return to neutral position. Repeat five times or as recommended. This exercise is mainly an abdominal strengthening exercise.

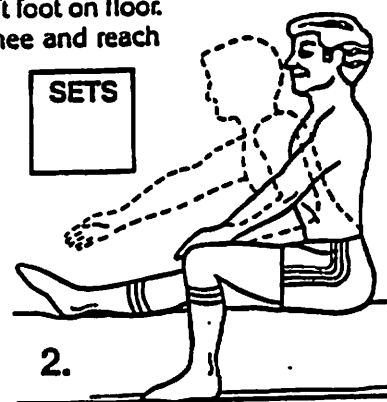
## Exercises — Chronic/Rehabilitative Stage

(These exercises are to be performed in addition to those suggested during the acute and subacute stages.)

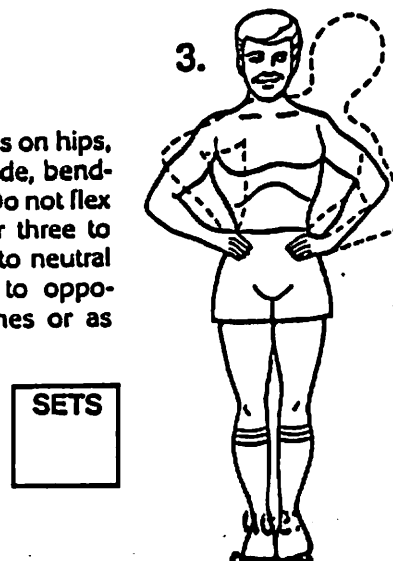
1. Lie on your back, with both knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Bring one knee to the chest, then straighten it to the vertical position, pointing the toe upward as far as possible. Bend knee back to chest and return to original position. Repeat with opposite leg. Do five times or as recommended.



2. Sit sideways on couch, stretch out right leg flat and put left foot on floor. Put left hand on left knee and reach forward with your right hand for the toes of the right foot. Reach as far forward as you can without discomfort. Feel the stretch behind the right leg, hold for three to five seconds and lean back to release the tension. Repeat with same leg five times, then change position and repeat with opposite leg.



3. Standing with hands on hips, bend slowly to one side, bending only at the waist. Do not flex hip or knee. Hold for three to five seconds. Return to neutral position and repeat to opposite side. Do five times or as recommended.

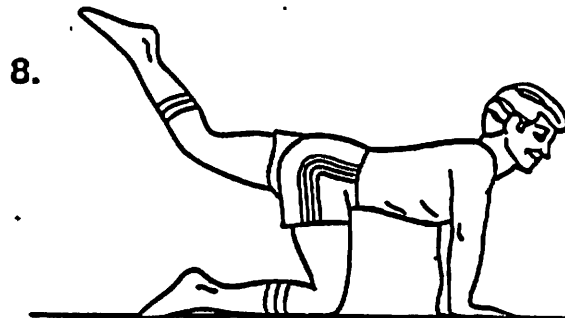
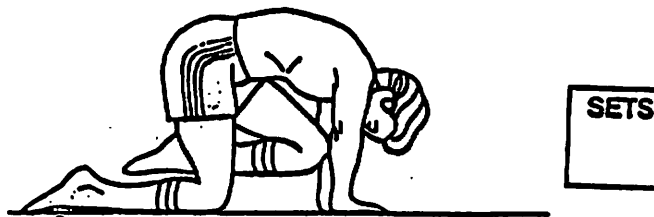
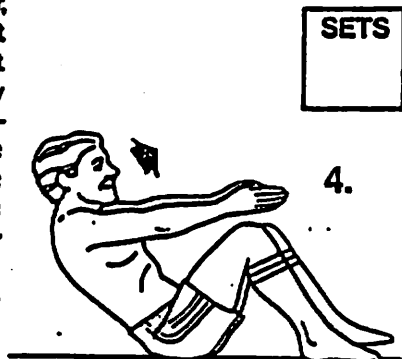


STOP HERE .

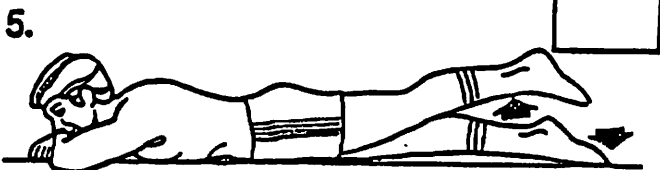
# SUB ACUTE/Recovery Stage (cont.)

\*\* As always... Pain ≠ gain! Stop any of these if they begin to hurt !!

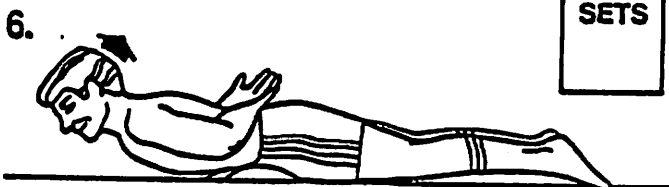
4. Lie on back, knees bent, feet flat on floor, hands on chest. It would be helpful to put the feet under a heavy chair or sofa for support or have someone hold the feet to the floor. Sit up to one quarter the sitting position and hold for three to five seconds. Relax. Repeat five times or as recommended.



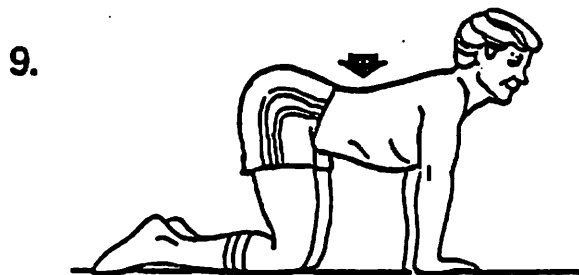
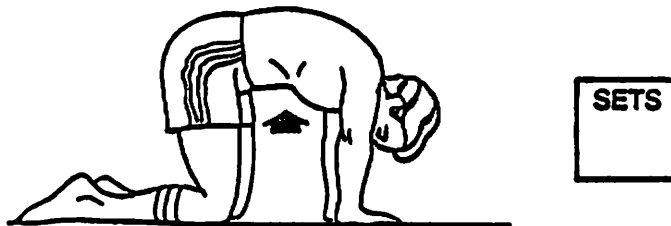
8. On hands and knees, draw one knee toward chest, flexing trunk and neck at same time. Then swing leg back to the outstretched position, extending neck and back at same time. Do five times or as recommended. Repeat with other leg.



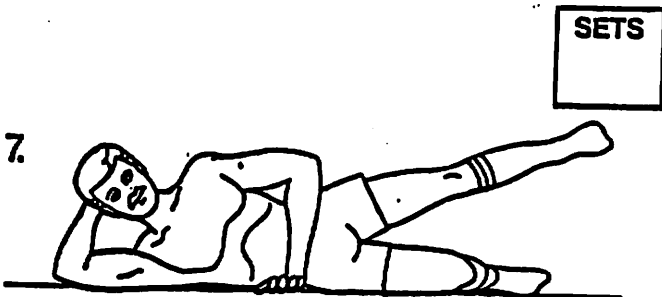
5. Lie face down on floor with large pillow under the hips and lower part of the abdomen. Lift one leg from the floor, keeping leg straight, hold for three seconds and relax. Repeat using other leg. Do five times or as recommended.



6. Lie face down on floor with a large pillow under the hips and lower part of the abdomen. Place hands behind the hips and lift the head and shoulders from the floor being cautious not to raise high enough to cause pain in lower back or create swayback. Resume resting position. Repeat five times or as recommended.



9. Assume a kneeling position, resting on your hands and knees. Arch your back like a cat, drop your head at the same time. Then reverse the arch by bringing up your head and forming a "U" with your spine. Do each set five times or as recommended.



7. Lie on your right side, raise left leg to as near a vertical position as possible, repeat five to ten times. Repeat lying on left side and raising right leg.