

Lower Back Pain: Home Exercise Program

A print-and-do home exercise program for load-related lower back pain - gentle movement, trunk control and hip strength you can start today.

At a Glance

- Keep moving within comfort - complete rest makes back pain last longer
- Do the movement and strength exercises below 2-3 times per week
- Expect mild discomfort during exercise; sharp, increasing leg pain is a stop sign
- Return to normal activity gradually as pain settles

The Program

Every morning (2-3 minutes):

1. Cat-cow: 8 slow cycles on hands and knees, moving with your breath.
2. Walk or move around the house for 3-5 minutes.

Strength, 2-3 times per week:

1. Bird dog: 2 sets of 8 per side. Reach one arm and the opposite leg without arching the back.
2. Glute bridge: 2 sets of 10. Squeeze the glutes and lift the hips in a straight line.
3. Dead bug: 2 sets of 8 per side. Keep the lower back still while the limbs move.

Daily:

- Walk - start with 10-15 minutes and build gradually
- Change position every 30-45 minutes during long sits

Do This

- Move within comfort, even if it's a little sore afterward
- Use the hips and legs when lifting - get close to the load
- Keep the back moving with gentle stretches like cat-cow

Avoid This

- Days of bed rest
- Lifting, bending and twisting through sharp pain
- Sitting for hours without breaks
- Repeatedly "testing" the back to see if it still hurts

When to See Someone

Seek urgent care for saddle numbness, difficulty urinating, weakness in both legs, or progressive leg weakness. Arrange an assessment for pain after major trauma, severe pain that is getting worse, or pain not improving after a few weeks.

References

1. NICE. "Low back pain and sciatica in over 16s: assessment and management." NG59.
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59>
2. NHS. "Back pain." <https://www.nhs.uk/content-widgets/health-a-to-z/back-pain>

This information is for education only and is not a medical diagnosis. InjuryAtlas does not replace an assessment by a qualified health professional. If you have severe pain, visible deformity, numbness, loss of function, or symptoms that are getting worse, seek medical care promptly.