

HEALTHY MOVES

Stretch of the Month

Lower Back Rotations

Loosening the lower back

Your lower back can develop tension and stiffness from too much sitting or too much physical work. Use this exercise to loosen built up tension from the day's activities, or to work out stiffness from inactivity. This exercise addresses the connection between the hips, pelvis and lower back. So, try it at the end of the day as well as first thing in the morning. If you find it soothing you may certainly repeat it throughout the day.

How to Stretch

- Lie on your back, with your knees bent.
- Rest your feet flat on the floor or bed and keep them close together.
- Let your knees drop to the left slowly, to a point where you begin to feel a mild tug on the outside of your right hip or low back.
- Bring your knees back to the starting position and let them drop to the right side again, slowly and only to the point of feeling a mild tug on the left hip or low back.
- See side bar for a guideline to how far you should go for a safe stretch.
- Repeat 20 to 40 times to each side



Stage 1

If you presently have some back pain limit the rocking to be within a pain-free range of movement. This may mean very little side to side movement of the knees. Try a slow rocking movement and see if it is soothing to your back. If so continue for 20 to 40 movements to either side. As your comfort zone increases allow the knees to move further to the side. If your pain increases stop and consult with your physician. If this is soothing to your back it can be repeated frequently throughout the day.

Stage 2

If you have had some back troubles in the past but do not have an irritable back or inflammatory condition follow these instructions. Place your hands on your lower ribs. Let your knees move to the side only until you feel the ribs on the opposite side move under your hand. At this point return to the other side. Repeat this for 20 to 40 movements to each side. As your hips and lower back loosen, with repetition, your knees will move further to the side before your ribs rise from the floor.

Stage 3

If you do not have any back troubles and are physically active, you may let comfort be your guide. Begin with a small amplitude range of motion and as you repeat the movement gradually explore if the knees can drop further -all the time staying in comfort. With repetition you will notice that the range increases. There is no optimum range except what is comfortable to you and provides some stretch. Allow yourself to repeat this 30 to 40 times to each side. However, do not go any further than the point where your shoulder blades rise from the floor. If you get to this point the exercise has already gone well beyond stretching the lower back.

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Disclaimer:

Suggestions made in this publication are no substitute for medical advice. If you have any pain or difficulty performing this stretch seek advice from your appropriate health professional.