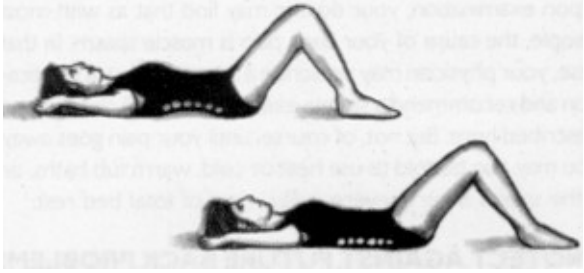


# Back Pain

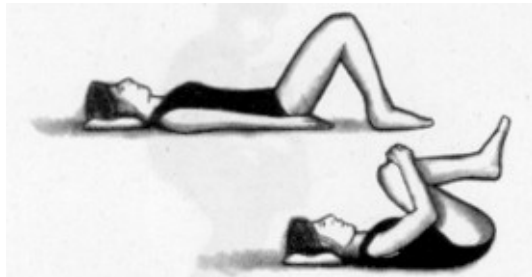
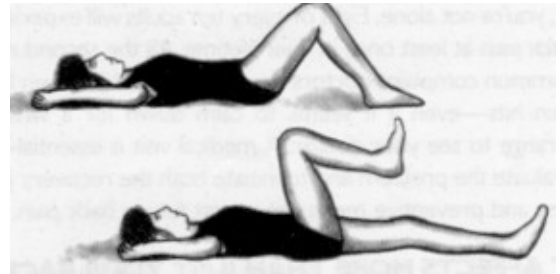


## PELVIC TILT

Lying on your back with your knees bent and your arms relaxed above your head, tighten your abdominal muscles until your back is flat against the floor. You will notice that your pelvis is tilted in. Try this same "pelvic tilt" while standing with your back against a flat wall. It takes the "sway" out of your back and strengthens the abdominal muscles.

## ALTERNATE LEG LIFT

In the same starting position, move one knee as close to your chest as possible, while straightening the other leg. Go back to starting position, and repeat with the opposite leg.

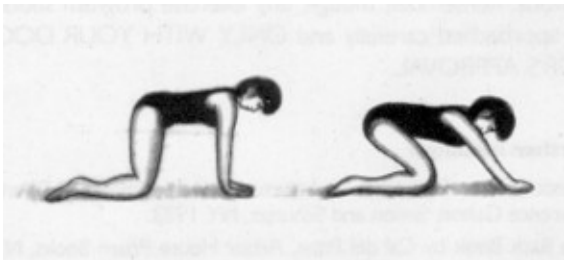
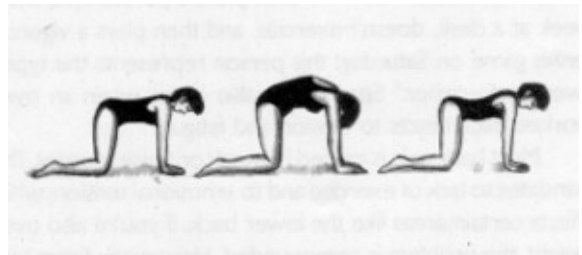


## DOUBLE KNEE BEND

The starting position is modified by putting arms at your sides and a small pillow under your head. Bring both knees toward your chest, and with shoulders flat to the mat, clasp your hands around your knees and pull them toward your chest. Hold for a count of 10. Relax and repeat the exercise.

## CAT STRETCH

Beginning on hands and knees with the back as flat as possible, round your back like a cat, tilt your pelvis forward, and drop your head. Then reverse the position, slowly making a "U" with your back. Repeat and relax.

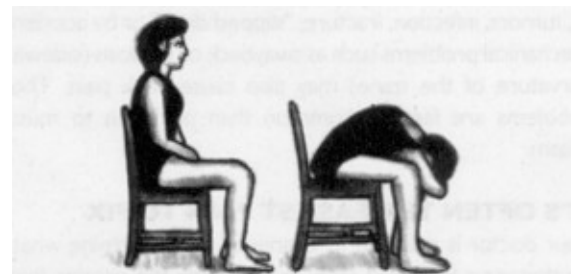


## PECTORAL STRETCH

In the same starting position as the cat stretch, slowly lower your buttocks and thighs toward the floor as you stretch your hands out in front of you. Stretch only until you feel a pull in the chest area. Then relax.

## SITTING BEND

Sitting on a hard chair with arms folded loosely, slowly let yourself droop until your head is between your knees. Tighten your abdominal muscles to pull yourself back to a sitting position.



**IF YOU HAVE LOW BACK PAIN...** you're not alone. Eight of every ten adults will experience back pain at least once in their lifetime. It's the second most common complaint doctors hear (first is colds).

**IT AFFECTS MORE THAN JUST YOUR BACK.** Back problems not only cause you discomfort but take time away from normal activities. If the pain continues you become less effective at work, at play, and in your personal relationships. And, once you've had a back problem, fear of the next episode can cause anxiety and stress. This makes you more prone to another attack.

**WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN?** Most back pain results from a tightening or "spasm" of the muscles. This happens when underworked muscles are given sudden strenuous work. An example is a person who sits all week at a desk, doesn't exercise, and then plays a vigorous tennis game on Saturday; this person represents the typical "weekend warrior." Spasm may also occur when an overworked back reacts to tension and fatigue.

Most back pain is caused by weak or tense muscles. That translates to lack of exercise and to emotional tension, which affects certain areas like the lower back. If you're also overweight, the problem is compounded. How many times have you heard people say they tried to lift something, or made a sudden twisting movement, and their back "went out"? This acute strain or trauma is even more likely to happen if you have chronic muscle tension, stiffness, or weakness, caused by stress and lack of exercise.

People in certain occupations - those that involve moving, lifting, or undue strain on back muscles - are prone to back problems.

Back pain can also be caused by diseases such as arthritis, tumors, infection, fracture, "slipped discs," or by accidents. Mechanical problems such as swayback or scoliosis (sideward curvature of the spine) may also cause back pain. These problems are far less common than pain due to muscle spasm.

**IT'S OFTEN THE EASIEST PAIN TO FIX** Your doctor is qualified to examine you, determine what is causing your low back pain, and provide the proper treatment if your pain results from a specific disease or mechanical condition. But aside from these kinds of problems, back pain may be the easiest kind of pain to fix. That's because "fixing it" involves things you can do yourself on a regular basis - with your physician's agreement.

**WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR** Upon examination, your doctor may find that as with most people, the cause of your back pain is muscle spasm. In that case, your physician may prescribe a muscle relaxant medication and recommend a simple exercise program like the one described here. You may also be told to use heat or cold, warm tub baths, or if the spasm is very severe, a few days of total bed rest.

**PROTECT AGAINST FUTURE BACK PROBLEMS** Strengthening abdominal and back muscles will provide protection that can prevent many future problems. When you stand, sit and walk, avoid extreme swayback. And when you're lifting a heavy load, don't bend from the waist. Use your leg muscles instead of your back to help lift. In bed, try to sleep on your side with your knees bent slightly Use a flat pillow and a firm mattress.

**RELAX... AND EXERCISE REGULARLY** You can relieve some stress-related symptoms by proper breathing, a positive mental attitude, and regular relaxation periods. A program of regular aerobic exercise (like walking or swimming) plus stretching is essential in keeping your back healthy.

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