



Low Back Pain

Stabilisation exercises for the painful lumbar region

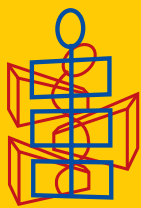
Introductory note

Make sure you are warm, wear woollen socks, and place one or two hot-water bottles at your feet and against the painful area. Apply warming plasters to the painful area or massage it with a warming topical cream or a cooling, anti-inflammatory, analgesic cream. Gentle massage is like 'stroking the soul' and is therefore important.

The following instructions are based on the three-dimensional principle: length, breadth and height. Imagine a matchbox that is standing on its rough side (= your pelvis). Now, in your mind's eye, pierce the matchbox from top to bottom with a toothpick. This is the longitudinal axis. With a second toothpick pierce the matchbox from right to left. This is the frontal axis. With a third toothpick pierce the matchbox from back to front. This is the sagittal axis. Push a small wheel onto each projecting end. This indicates the plane in which we can exercise.

Perform the exercises in blocks: never work through all the exercises in a single session.

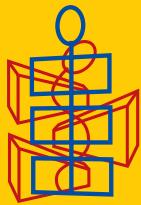
1. To begin with, it is productive to do some abdominal breathing exercises. As you breathe out, contract your abdomen below the navel. This improves perfusion, stimulates the circulation and gives you a better shape. Gradually make this breathing ever more expansive: lumbar region, rib cage, apex of the lungs, pushing the diaphragm downwards.
2. Make sure your feet are warm: make circling or paddling movements: move the front part of your foot up and down. Alternately clench and stretch your toes. This also improves perfusion and stimulates the circulation.
3. For the time being perform the following exercises only in your mind, going in all directions (dimensions). Concentrate on the painful area in question. What does this mean?
For the moment lie on your back, with your legs stretched out.
In your mind's eye, push your pelvis along the axes described above. In this setting the longitudinal axis is the most important because it is along this axis that stretching of the painful area takes place. Without stretching (= length) of the area to be exercised, nothing can move.
4. Start stretching: press both heels against the exercise mat and exert pull on the pelvis, flexing the knees slightly. Work slowly. In the process your pelvis will be pulled downwards a little. Release (= relaxation) should be performed at the same tempo as tensing. Never work jerkily. Breathe in while stretching, and breathe out during release. Keep on incorporating abdominal breathing in between. Keep on inserting this exercise.
5. A little 'extra': During stretching (= active elongation), move your pelvis back and forth a few millimetres.
6. Guide your pelvis along the frontal axis a few millimetres to the right, and then to the left. Do this more in your mind than in reality.
7. Press your lumbar spine gently against the exercise mat and relax again. Always keep below the pain threshold. Especially in lumbar lordosis.
8. Raise your lumbar spine slightly from the exercise mat and relax again. Watch the pain threshold! Especially in lumbar kyphosis.
9. Press your pelvis firmly against the exercise mat.
10. Firmly clench one buttock. Your hip will turn forwards slightly (transverse plane). Now do the same on the other side too.



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11. Press one buttock against the exercise mat. The movement is minimal but it tenses as far as the oblique abdominal muscles. Keep on inserting Exercise 5 and relax. Later increase to 'Tensing in 12s' (Exercise 20).
12. While breathing in, push down slightly with one heel. While breathing out, relax. Insert abdominal breathing.
13. As for 10. In this case, press your heel against the exercise mat during the stretching phase.
14. Raise your stretched leg slightly from the hip and relax again. You will be amazed how these movements – although hardly visible – can be felt.
15. Hip circling: tense one buttock, raise your hip, and guide outwards. Use your other hip to help push in this direction.
16. As for 13. Now add the other side straight away (= a 'horizontal figure of eight').
17. The same except: move back – forth – round about. The movements are mostly just a few millimetres.
18. One hip forwards, lift and back. Insert breathing: lower your diaphragm, and gradually direct air upwards into the apex of the lungs.
19. Where pain is present, there is a sense of weakness at the site affected. Therefore strengthening exercises are called for. For example, work on the quadriceps (the muscle at the front of your thighs): lift your toes and press the back of your knees against the exercise mat. Your heels will lift. All leg exercises also stabilise the lumbar region.
20. As for 19, but at the end of the exercise add on 'Tensing in 12s': first slowly count to 4, and then back as you relax. Later count to 8, then to 10 and finally to 12, while holding the tension. In each case relax by counting for the same number of seconds. Never work jerkily.
21. As for 20, and additionally clench your buttocks together.
22. Follow this by properly relaxing all your gluteal (buttock) muscles. Imagine the painful area melting away and 'dispersing', like a raindrop that has just landed on the ground. Then try to stretch once again (= raising your heels).
23. If you can already manage, do everything with your legs bent. The movements are larger. During each movement breathe in as far as the high point. Hold 'at the top' for a little, breathe in and out a couple of time, and then relax slowly.
24. After a firm tension exercise, repeat Exercise 20, possibly making minute sideways-shaking movements with your buttocks. This further increases the stretching. At the same time 'breathe into' the painful area.
25. Press your entire buttock region into the exercise mat, tensing intermittently – each time increasing a little.
26. Press only one buttock against the exercise mat.
27. Press both your legs together – and also while doing so press your legs alternately against the exercise mat.
28. Push one heel outwards against the exercise mat.
29. With one heel in internal or external rotation, push it outwards. In between keep on repeating the breathing exercise.
30. Push one heel diagonally outwards and downwards, pressing at that point against the exercise mat.
31. With your pelvis 'roll around the axes'.
32. With your legs stretched: a) tilt your pelvis and tense your buttocks; b) with your pelvis upright, tense your buttocks. Keep on inserting Exercise 20.

Once your lower back has become stable, you may use all other general gymnastics exercises. There is little point in doing the exercises quickly. Exercise slowly and count, always increasing the tension a little. It may be that something that was slightly dis-organ-ised, something that was 'out of joint', will come back into line with a slight click.



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33. Place your feet flat on the ground. Lift one leg, fold your hands behind your thigh and pull towards you.
34. Lift one leg, take hold behind your thigh, perform foot-circling movements.
35. Perform 'bicycling exercises' on your back, initially with one leg, later with both.
36. Sit up straight on a chair. Tense your buttocks and attempt the above exercises. This is also one way of filling the time while watching the news on TV.
37. While standing, raise one knee, and place your foot on the chair.
38. While standing, raise your stretched leg forwards, sideways and backwards without also rotating your hip.

Restless legs.

You may develop restless legs while exercising. Whenever the twitching is about to start, make your leg stiff or brace the front part of one foot against the other.

I would be delighted to hear how you get on with these exercises and what effect they have.