7 Best Stretches for Lower Back Pain Relief

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Back Stretches for Lower Back Pain

Did you know that back pain is the leading cause of disability? Half of all Americans state that they have back pain each year, and 31 million Americans currently experience back pain. If medication and other treatments do not work, sometimes stretching is used. For this article, we will stick to back stretches for lower back pain.

Although low back pain is typically an acute condition, meaning that it lasts less than three months, reoccurrence can occur, and for some people, it becomes chronic. As such, low back pain is costly to our nation; we lose 264 million workdays annually and pay approximately $50 billion in healthcare costs. If we factor in the lost workdays, that figure jumps to about $100 billion.

If you are reading this because you don not know what else to do, well, read on to learn more about how a regular stretching routine may help improve your back pain and what the seven best stretches for lower back pain relief are.

Can Stretching Help Lower Back Pain?

Yes, stretching can help lower back pain!

Many factors can contribute to lower back pain. Our backs are comprised of many bones, ligaments, tendons, joints and muscles.

The anatomy of the back is so complex, and various injuries can occur. For example, sprained muscle(s) can happen, or a disk can slip. Other factors can contribute too, such as carrying too much weight, arthritis and poor posture. Also, medical conditions can cause back pain.

The rationale between stretching is multifaceted, and the benefits include:

- Reducing the risk of disability that may be associated with back pain.
- Improvement in range of motion.
- Improvement mobility of the back.
- Reducing tension in the muscles that support the back.

How Often Should You Stretch Your Lower Back?

In general, most stretches can be performed daily. However, there are some caveats to this recommendation.

Back pain that is persistent or severe should be discussed with a physician. Those with chronic back pain should develop an exercise routine with expert supervision; the goal is to achieve a functional goal.

Excercise and Back Pain: What You Should Know Before You Start

It may seem like a good idea to stretch it out, but that may not always be the case.

Most back pain is not serious. If your back pain is persistent or keeps you up at night, or if it includes leg pain, you should seek medical attention. Otherwise, likely staying active is safe.

Another good rule to abide by? If it hurts, do not do it! Too often, we push ourselves to the point of pain, because if it hurts while we stretch or exercise, it must be good for us. This is generally not true. If your back pain does not improve with exercise and self-care remedies, you should seek an expert opinion.

7 Stretches to Try

So, now you are ready to stretch! Here are some great stretches for your lower back that you can try that will surely have you feeling great.

1. Prone Press-Up

Also called cobra in yoga, the prone press-up stretches the lumbar region of the back. It facilitates the restoration of the normal curvature of the spine.

In order to do a prone press-up, you should:

1. Lie flat on your stomach on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat.
2. Place your forearms below your chest, back extended, palms flat on the floor and prop yourself up.
3. While inhaling, straighten the elbows and extend your back. Press your hips into the floor.
4. Do not lock your elbows but continue to lift until a gentle stretch is felt in the lower back.
5. Hold the press-up for three to five seconds.
6. While exhaling, return to the floor.
7. Perform this stretch 10 times.

2. Pelvic Tilt

The pelvic tilt strengthens not only the muscles of the lower back but also the abdomen and hips.

In order to perform a pelvic tilt, you should:

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat.
2. Place your feet flat with your knees bent.
3. While exhaling, press the small of your back into the floor.
4. Hold for a count of 15 seconds; you should keep the pelvis and lower back muscles flexed.
5. While inhaling, return to the start position.
6. Perform this stretch 10 times.

3. Knee-to-Chest Stretch

This chest helps to elongate the lower back, which relieves tension and pain.

In order to perform the knee-to-chest stretch, you should:

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat.
2. Place your feet flat with your knees bent.
3. Use your hands to guide your right knee towards your chest.
4. Hold your knee towards your chest for a count of five while pressing your spine into the floor and contracting the abdominal muscles.

5. Return your foot back to the starting position; repeat with the opposite leg.
6. Repeat several times.

4. Lower Back Rotational Stretch

The lower back rotational stretch, also called a reclined twist in yoga, helps reduce tension in the lower back and the trunk in general. It can also improve the musculature of the core muscles.

In order to perform the lower back rotational stretch, you should:

1. Lie flat on your back on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat.
2. Place your feet flat with your knees bent.
3. Ensure that your shoulders are pressed firmly into the floor.
4. Allow your knees to roll to one side.

For a deeper stretch:

1. Open your arms in a T position. Bring your gaze over your opposite shoulder. For example, if your knees have dropped to the left side of your body, your gaze should be over the right shoulder.
2. Hold the position for at least 10 seconds.
3. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side.
4. Perform the rotational stretch three times on each side.

5. Cat Stretches

A classic yoga asana, or posture, the cat stretch is known to be relaxing as well as strengthening. The cat stretch can strengthen the entire back as it helps to bring length and eases tension.

In order to perform the cat stretch, you should:

1. Come onto your hands and knees on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat. Your palms should be directly under your shoulders and your knees should be directly under your hips.
2. Arch your back towards the ceiling while bringing your gaze towards the floor. Your belly button should be tucked towards the spine.
3. Slowly relax the spine, perhaps allowing your abdomen to sag towards to floor.
4. Repeat several times.

6. Superman Stretches

Superman stretches (named because you will look just like the flying superhero) help strengthen the back extensors. Back extensors are the muscles in the back that assist with posture, and they are on either side of the spine.

In order to perform the Superman stretch, you should:

1. Lie flat on your stomach on the floor, a blanket, or a yoga mat.
2. Stretch your arms forward.
3. Raise your arms off the ground. Then, raise your feet off the ground. Try to keep your limbs about 6 inches off the ground.
4. Your belly button should be tucked towards your spine; this engages your core muscles.
5. Keep your head up and the gaze at the floor.
6. Hold the position for several seconds.
7. Repeat 10 times.

7. Seated Lower Back Rotational Stretches

If your back is aching at work, here is the stretch for you! Similar to the lying lower back rotational stretch, the seated lower back rotational stretch helps to relieve pain while strengthening the lower back and building the musculature of the abdomen.

In order to perform a seated lower back rotational stretch (at work, no less), you should:

1. Sit in your chair. Plant your feet firmly on the floor.
2. Twist, from your core, right. Keep your hips square while keeping your spine tall.
3. Place your hands behind your head or place your left hand on your right knee while twisting.
4. Hold the twist for about 10 seconds.
5. Repeat the twist on the opposite side.
6. Repeat each side three to five times.

In Conclusion

The above stretches may help you achieve lower back pain relief the more you continue to do them.

However, if you are experiencing lower back pain that is acute or does not go away with gentle stretches, you should make an appointment with your doctor.

Lastly, if these lower back stretches make your pain worse, it is best to immediately stop doing them and consult your doctor.