Lower Back Program

Recovering from lower back pain isn't just about relieving tension during treatment. Research consistently shows that combining manual therapy with targeted mobility, stretching, and strengthening exercises leads to faster recovery, reduced recurrence rates, and better long-term outcomes. When muscles are weak, stiff, or unbalanced, the spine loses support—making it easier for pain to return. These exercises help restore movement, activate stabilising muscles, and build resilience so your lower back stays healthy and mobile.

Perform the moving exercises for a count of ten repetitions, building up to 3 sets of 10 reps. The stretching exercises should be held for 30 seconds. Start with the exercises recommended to you in the treatment and build up gradually. If you feel any pain at all then please modify the movement or stop and call Gavin.

Cat / Cow Stretch (Lumbar spine mobility)

Start on hands and knees. Gently arch your back toward the ceiling (cat) tucking your bum and chin up, then drop your belly and lift your chest (cow) lifting your bum and chin up. Move slowly and breathe with each movement. Think wave like movements – don't jam and hold.

Child's Pose (Lumbar spine stretch)

Start on hands and knees. Sit your hips back toward your heels and stretch your arms forward on the floor. Relax your chest down and breathe deeply through your ribs.

Cobra Pose (Gentle back extension)

Lie on your stomach with elbows directly under shoulders. Gently lift your chest using your back muscles while keeping hips on the floor. Only rise as far as comfortable. To advance use hands under shoulders for a deeper extension.

Glute Bridge (Double Leg) (Glute activation)

Lie on your back with knees bent. Press through your heels to lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from knee to shoulder. Using control take 3 seconds to lift and 3 seconds to lower.

Glute Bridge (Single Leg) (Unilateral Glute strength)

Lie on your back with your knees bent. Lift one leg up so it is in a straight line next to your opposite thigh. Press through the heels to lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from knee to shoulder. 3 seconds up, 3 seconds down.

Bird Dog (Core stability)

Start on your hands and knees. Reach one arm forward and the opposite leg straight back. Keep hips level and your core engaged, then switch sides. Move slowly to avoid twisting.

Knees to Chest (Lumbar decompression stretch)

Pull both knees toward your chest while lying on your back. Gently hug them in and breathe into your lower back.

Knee Twist (Spinal rotation stretch)

Lying on your back, drop both knees to one side while keeping shoulders flat. Hold, then switch sides for a gentle spinal rotation.

Side Plank (Lateral core strength)

Lie on your side and prop yourself up on your forearm. Lift your hips to form a straight line from head to feet, holding with control.

Plank (Core activation)

Support your body on forearms and toes, keeping your spine straight and ribs pulled in. Hold without letting your hips drop or lift. Easy: knees and hands.

Happy Baby (Lower back release)

Lie on your back and hold the inside or outside of your feet. Gently pull your knees toward your armpits while keeping your lower back relaxed.

Low Back Stretch (Deep rotational stretch)

Lying on your back, cross one leg over the other and gently pull your knee across your body. Keep the opposite shoulder on the floor.

Sciatic Nerve Floss (Gentle sciatic nerve glide)

Sit on a chair. Flex your foot and gently lift your chin as you straighten the knee, then point your toes and drop your head as you bend it. Move slowly and stay within a comfortable range.

Clam (Hip external rotation)

Lie on your side with knees bent, feet together. Open your top knee without rotating your hips, then lower slowly.

Side Leg Raise (Lateral hip strengthening)

Lie on your side with the top leg straight. Lift the top leg upward without leaning back, then lower slowly with control.

Glute Stretch (Deep hip stretch)

Sitting up cross on leg over the outstretched other. Hug the knee into your chest and twist. You should feel a stretch deep in the hip.

Figure Four Stretch (Piriformis / Upper hamstring stretch)

Laying down. Cross one ankle over the opposite knee. Pull the bottom leg toward your chest until the glutes stretch.

Hamstring Stretch

With your legs outstretched and keeping a straight back lean forward to hold your toes. Single side is with one leg tucked in. Hold for 30 seconds

Hip Flexor Stretch (Anterior hip opening)

In a lunge position, gently shift your weight forward until you feel the front of the hip stretch. Keep your torso tall, tuck your bottom under and avoid arching your back.

Groin Stretch (Inner thigh stretch)

Sit with the soles of your feet together and knees out wide. Gently press your knees toward the floor while keeping your back straight.

Hip Mobility 90/90's (Hip rotation mobility)

Sit with both knees bent at 90 degrees, one leg in front and one to the side. Without using your hands swap leg positions. Alternate sides x10

Chair Squats (Supported leg strengthening)

Stand in front of a chair and lower yourself back as if sitting down. Lightly touch the chair, then stand back up using your legs. Keep your torso upright and arms out in front for balance.

Air Squat (Leg strengthening)

Stand with feet hip-width apart. Lower into a squat by sending hips back and bending knees, then push through your heels to return to standing. Keep your torso upright and arms out in front for balance.

These exercises support the hands-on work you receive in treatment. Consistency is key. The stronger and more mobile your hips, core, and lower back become, the less likely pain will return.

Other tips for lower back pain:

- Sleep on your side with a pillow between your knees for hip and spinal alignment
- Walk 10 – 20 minutes daily to reduce stiffness
- Magnesium 300 – 400mg daily for muscle spasm
- Curcumin 500mg – 1000mg daily for anti-inflammatory relief
- PEA 300mg twice daily for nerve related pain
- Ice 10–15 minutes 1 – 3 times per day for inflammation. Ice is generally best if you have just injured your back and for the first 3 days afterwards
- Heat 15–20 minutes 1 – 3 times per day for stiffness. Heat is generally best if it is stiff and chronic and a few days after you have just injured it
- Self-massage with a lacrosse ball into the quadratus lumborum and upper glutes (see me in the clinic for instructions)
- Apply warming liniments to the area (Fisiocrem, Arnica and Comfrey, Zheng Gu Shui, Tiger balm etc)
- Reduce aggravating factors – avoid deep bending, prolonged sitting, or twisting during flare-ups
- Long term lifestyle considerations – reduce or quit smoking, alcohol and other pro-inflammatory substances, lose weight (especially around the midsection - aka beer belly), get a good night sleep, minimise stress

Stop and contact me if you experience:

- sharp, catching, or shooting pain
- numbness or tingling down the leg
- increasing pain with each session
- pain that does not improve within 2 weeks

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