

Low Back

Let's start by lying on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Place your hands at your sides or on your belly. Draw your shoulders back slightly to expand your chest and relax your shoulders away from your ears. Close your mouth. Begin breathing deeply through your nose. Relax your belly and breathe into the lower part of your lungs first so that as you breathe in, your belly rises, and as you exhale, your belly relaxes back down. Bring your focus to your breath, making it smooth and fluid - feeling the wave of air rolling up the front of your body on inhale, then feeling your body relax as you exhale. Letting go of any other thoughts or concerns you may have had before starting this practice, give your full attention to what you are doing in this moment. Simply be here now, following the flow of your breath.

Take one more complete breath, filling your lungs () and exhaling completely. () Then open your eyes, bringing your knees to your chest. Holding onto your knees begin rocking from side to side. Feel the massage across your sacrum. Simply rocking back and forth like can really help ease low back tension.

Keeping your knees at your chest, bring your hands out to a T position with your palms down. As you exhale, drop your knees to the right. Inhale, back to center, exhale to the left. Continue moving your knees back and forth, not only massaging your sacrum, but also stretching your spine and low back. Excellent.

Come back to center, hugging your knees in. Extend your left leg, still holding your right knee near your chest. Exhale, switch legs, extending your right. Continue switching your legs back and forth, moving with your breath. This is a great way to stretch your hips and low back.

Bring both knees back to center, placing your feet on the floor about hip width apart and your hands at your sides with your palms down. () Inhale, lifting your hips up, exhale, rolling back down. Again, inhale, press your hips up, exhale, slowly roll down. Move with your breath, then add you arms if you like. Inhaling, lifting hips, raising your arms overhead, exhaling, rolling down, bringing your hands back to your sides. Do two more, moving with your breath.

Lower down and stay here. Bring arms out to T position with your palms down. Keep your feet hip width apart or farther and drop your knees from side to side. This is a great stretch for your hip flexors and quadriceps, as well as your low back. You've got it.

Come back to center, bringing your knees to your chest. Place your hands underneath your knees and tuck your chin to your chest. Begin rocking back and forth along your spine. Bending your knees as you come forward and straightening them as you go back, only going as far as is comfortable for you. Keep your chin tucked to protect your neck. This exercise provides a nice massage to your spine and I happen to think it's a lot of fun. After a while, it gets to be a bit addictive, and you may find yourself doing this exercise at all sorts of times. Come all the way back up. Then come onto all fours. (pause)

Check that your wrists are right under your shoulders and knees about hip width apart. Exhaling, round your back, dropping your chin to your chest. Inhaling, look up, drawing your shoulders back, opening your chest. Again, exhale, rounding, lifting your abs in, inhale, drop your belly and open your chest. Continue moving back and forth, doing your best to connect your breath with your movement, making both your breath and movement, smooth and fluid. Close your eyes if you like. I find this really helps to lessen any distractions and helps me focus on my breath and connecting it to my movement. See how it works for you. (pause) Then, come back to a neutral position.

Inhale, extend your right arm and left leg out, exhale, lower to all four. Inhaling, extend your left arm and right leg out, exhaling to all fours. Continue extending your opposite hand and foot, switching from side to side. Getting long here, really reaching through your hand and foot on each extension, providing traction for your spine. That's great! Then come back to all fours.

Walk your hands slightly forward and begin making big circles with your hips, bending your arms as you come forward and relaxing as you go back. Just imagine you're doing the hula, only you're doing it low to the ground here. Okay, so this may not be an exercise you want to do at your office, but it is a great way to relieve tension in your low back. (pause)

Come back to center. Sit back on your heels, lowering your forehead towards the ground, coming into extended child's pose. Breathe into your upper back, allowing it to stretch as you inhale and release as you exhale. Focus on your breath, making it fluid and deep. Let your body and your back relax completely here. (pause)

On your next inhale, come forward, dropping your hips down. Exhale, press back to child's pose. Inhaling, come forward, only dropping your hips as far as is comfortable, exhale, press back. Keep moving back and forth, keeping your arms straight if you can. This exercise helps to stretch your shoulders, hips and low back, releasing tension from your low back. You're doing great.

Come down onto your belly, placing your hands under your shoulders. Inhale, lifting your head and chest, exhale, pressing down through your hands, but keeping your belly button on your mat and your arms bent, so you're working your triceps. Dropping your shoulders away from your ears, draw your elbows back, squeezing your shoulder blades. Breathe comfortably here. This is Cobra or Bhujangasana.

Practice it often, because it's a great way to strengthen your low back and the muscles in your butt, while you also stretch your chest and shoulders. On your next exhale, slowly lower down. Great job. Press back into extended child's pose sitting back on your heels, arms stretched out in front of you. Breathe into your back, feeling your upper back stretch as you inhale, letting it release as you exhale. Whenever you arch your back, as in Cobra, make sure to allow the muscles in your back to release in a gentle forward bend like this child's pose (pause)

Come back onto your belly. Place your hands at your sides with your palms facing your thighs. Drop your forehead to the floor. Inhaling, lift your head and chest. Exhaling, lift your arms and legs. Keep your knees straight and keep bringing your arms up and back towards each other. Press your shoulders away from your ears to lengthen your spine and squeeze your shoulder blades together to open your chest and strengthen your back. Keep your head in a neutral position to keep any strain out of your neck and breathe softly here. I know, it's a lot of instructions, but you're doing great. Inhaling, lift a little higher. () Exhaling slowly drop back down. Place your hands under your shoulders and press back to child's pose.

Breathe through your nose, breathing deeply into your back, letting the muscles in your back relax and enjoying this stretch, letting yourself feel great. (pause)

Come back to all fours. (pause)

Step your right foot forward into a lunge. Check that your knee is right over your ankle to protect the ligaments there. Then scoot your left foot back, until you feel a stretch in your hip flexor. Drop your hips down and breathe into your belly. Breathing slowly and deeply will help your muscles relax more, allowing you to go more deeply into this stretch. Stretching your hips like this will improve the range of motion in your hips, so your back won't have the additional strain of having to compensate for a lack of flexibility there.

Straighten your front leg, flexing your foot and keeping your hips raised, coming into a runner's stretch. In this exercise you should feel a stretch in your hamstrings. Just notice where you feel that stretch, only going as far as is comfortable for you. Keeping your hamstrings flexible is important for maintaining full range of motion, so again your back isn't left compensating for the lack of flexibility.

Come back to all fours.

Step your left foot forward into a lunge. Check that your knee is over your ankle to protect your knee and ankle. Push your right foot back, until you feel a stretch in your hip flexor, keeping your right knee on the floor. Drop your hips down and breathe into your belly, allowing your muscles to relax. Drop your shoulders away from your ears. Let yourself go deeply into this stretch, relaxing more. Well done. (pause)

Then straighten your front leg, flexing your foot and keeping your hips raised, coming into a runner's stretch. Don't worry if you can't fully straighten your front leg, just go to where you feel a comfortable stretch and breathe slowly here, relaxing your body, allowing your hamstrings to stretch. Excellent! (pause)

Come back to all fours. Spread your fingers wide, curl your toes under and press your hips up and back, coming into down dog. Check that your hands are about shoulder width apart and feet about hip width apart. Pump your heels to stretch your calves.

Shaking your head from side to side, let your neck get loose. Press your hips up as you release your heels down towards the floor, getting long. Press your chest towards your feet to open your chest and stretch your shoulders. Breathe deeply through your nose, breathing into your back. Great job.

Walk your feet forward towards your hands, bringing your feet about hip width apart and parallel. Bend your knees here to take any strain out of your back. Drop your head, looking towards your knees and shake your head from side to side, getting loose, breathing deeply into your back. (pause) Bend your knees a lot, lift your head and chest, and, inhaling, sweep your arms overhead, exhaling, bringing your hands to your heart.

Come to a wall, making sure you have enough space for your whole body against the wall. Stand facing the wall, far enough back so your finger tips can just reach the wall at the height of your belly. Take a step back. Drop your head and chest, pressing your tailbone back, bringing your chest parallel to the floor. Keep your back flat, bending your knees if you need to. Check that your feet are about hip width apart and parallel. Shake your head from side to side, letting it relax. Spread your fingers wide, pressing against the wall with your hands. Breathing into your back with slow, smooth, deep breaths. Feel the stretch across your back. (pause)

You can stay here, or if you want to work on strengthening your back more, on your next inhale, raise your right leg. Reach back with your right foot as you press your hands into the wall. Keep lifting through your right leg, trying to bring it parallel to the floor, but only going to your edge. If you feel any strain, make sure to lower your leg. On your next exhale, slowly lower your right leg. Inhaling, lift your left leg. Do your best to bring your leg parallel with the floor, but stop lifting it if you feel any strain or discomfort. Breathe deeply here as you stretch in two opposite directions, getting longer and stronger. (pause) On your next exhale, lower your foot back to the floor. ()

Then, lift your head and chest, take a step forward and come back to standing, bringing your hands to your sides.

Turn away from the wall, standing about two feet away from the wall with your feet parallel and about hip width apart. Sweep your arms overhead, interlacing your fingers. Keeping your arms next to your ears, inhale, reaching up, exhaling, press your hips forward and bring your hands back to the wall. With your arms next to your ears, press your hands up the wall to open your chest more. Breathe deeply into your chest, increasing the circulation to your heart and lungs. Excellent. Keep your knees straight and your hips pressed forward. (pause) On your next exhale, come back to standing. Lean your butt against the wall and fold forward, allowing your back to release. Breathe deeply here. Folding forward in this way helps take any strain out of your low back, so you can allow your muscles to relax more. (pause)

Slowly come back up to standing. Then get your rolled blanket and come back to your mat. (pause)

Place the blanket long ways down the middle of your mat. Sit on floor with your right hip close to end of your blanket. Bend your knees, sliding your feet to the left. Turn to the right, placing your hands on either side of the rolled blanket. Lower your chest to the blanket, placing your arms on the floor and your left cheek on the blanket, looking towards your right hand. Breathe slowly into your back, using each exhalation to release a little more into the twist. Relax your shoulders. I like to gently press down with my right hand here. It helps me go a little further into the twist, but be careful doing that, only going as far as it feels comfortable. (pause)

Place your hands under your shoulders and press down with your hands to slowly sit up.

Turn to the other side, bringing your left hip close to the end of your blanket. Bend your knees, moving your feet to the right. Turn to the left, placing your hands on either side of the rolled blanket. Lower your chest to the blanket, placing your arms on the floor and your right cheek on the blanket. Breathe deeply into your back, breathing into the twist. This position is a great way to relieve tension in the muscles in your back and sides of your body. You're doing great! (pause)

Place your hands under your shoulders. Press down with your hands, coming back to sitting.

Sit at the end of the blanket, bringing your tailbone next to the blanket. Use your hands to lie down on your rolled blanket, so the blanket lines up with your spine and is long enough to support your head. Bring your arms out to the sides with your palms up. This will help open your chest as the blanket provides gentle pressure along your spine, relieving tension there. Breathe slowly and deeply, allowing your shoulders, head and neck to relax completely. Let your hips and the muscles in your back and buttocks go loose. Feel the muscles in your legs release as your feet flop out to the sides.

Take a deep breath in through your nose, () and exhale through your mouth, allowing your body to sink deeper into the floor. Stay here, relaxing in this position as long as you like. Whenever you're done relaxing, simply roll onto your side to come back to sitting. Thank you for joining me today and may your back always feel strong and healthy. Namaste.