Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Low Back Pain Exercises Level 3

Version number: **2**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Low Back Pain Exercises Level 3

Patient Information

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Services

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Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding injury, or whether or not you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your General Practitioner (GP) or Physiotherapist prior to commencing any exercises shown here.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and doesn't have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown here are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference; they are not exhaustive and can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

Instructions

- Aim to do the exercise plan 3 to 4 times per week, with at least 1 day off in between to allow for recovery.
- Each exercise is repeated a number of times (for example, 5 or 10 times) to build up strength and flexibility. The repetitions make a 'set'.
- The number of repetitions is a guide and can be increased or decreased according to pain levels. If the exercise causes pain that lasts for more than 2 hours after finishing the exercise, then decrease the repetitions.
- Complete each exercise slowly and in a controlled manner; you should take your time and not rush. Take 30 seconds rest in between each set.

Contact the Physio department if you find the exercises are making your pain worse overall.

Contact Information

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Low Back Pain Level 3 - Exercises 1 to 10



1. Lumbar Extensions (Arms extended)

Lie face down, push up onto your arms until your elbows are as straight as you can get them.

Press your pelvis and stomach into the floor to arch your lower back.

Then bend your upper back upwards, keeping your forearms on the floor. Raise your chest as high as you can.

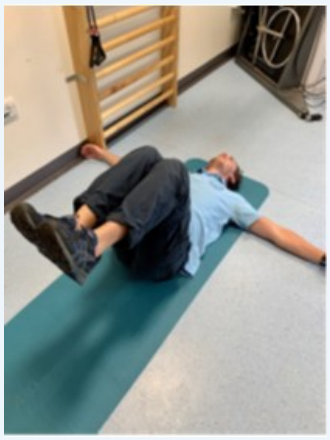
Hold for approximately 30 seconds.

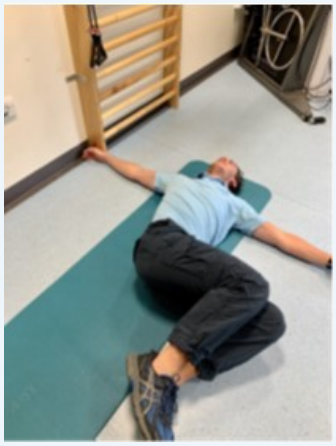
Adaptations: Lumbar Extensions (Arms extended)

To increase the stretch further: Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth.

On the breath out, let your hips/pelvis sink into the floor whilst keeping your shoulders upright.

Hold again for approximately 30 seconds.





1. Knee Rolls (Elevated)

Lie on your back, knees together and bent and elevated in the air.

Roll knees from side to side, keeping your upper trunk and shoulders flat in contact with the floor.

Keeping knees elevated throughout the movement.

Keep the movement at a moderate pace.

Repeat 10 times to each side.



1.



Glute Bridge (Single Leg)

Lie on your back; one knee bent with the other foot flat, the other straight. Aim to get the foot of the bent leg as close to your buttocks as possible.

Contract/tighten your deep core muscles (pull your tummy button in), squeeze your buttock muscles together.

Lifting your buttock off the floor; hold this bridge position as high as possible for 2 seconds, trying to keep your thighs parallel to each other, before slowly lowering down to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times each leg.



1. Front Plank (Press Up position) 30 second Hold

Press Up position, hands, and elbows directly underneath the shoulders, feet, and elbows both shoulder width apart.

Ensure a straight line from your shoulders to your feet.

Contract and tighten your deep core muscles (pull your tummy button in) throughout this exercise, keeping a neutral spine.

Repeat 5 times.



1.



Thread the Needle (4-Point Kneeling)

Start from a hands (elbows straight) and knees position, maintaining a neutral/flat spine.

Move one arm across the body and behind the other arm.

Pause briefly once you have reached as far as possible, before gently returning, and then taking the arm straight up towards the ceiling, reaching as far as possible again.

Adaptations: Thread the Needle (4 Point Kneeling)

Do not hold your breath throughout movement; instead, when reaching, try exhaling.



1. Sit - Stand (Small/Moderate Weights)

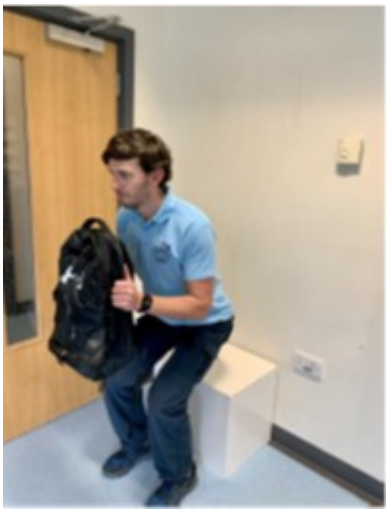
Stand with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointing slightly outwards.

Head up, back straight, and contract/tighten deep core muscles (pull tummy button in).

Slowly squat down, sticking your buttock out and keeping your back straight.

Touch the chair then return to the starting position, without locking your knees out.

Perform whilst holding onto a small weight in both hands, such as a bag with bottles of water in.



Repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions.

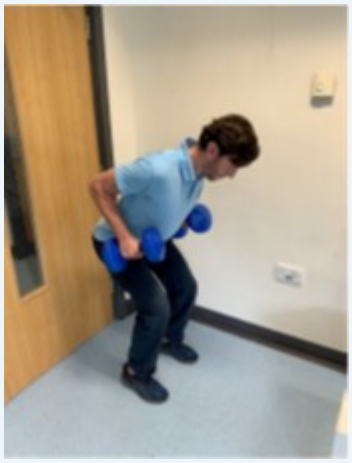


1. Bent Over Row (Unsupported)

Keeping a neutral spine, slight bend in the knees and hinging from the hips. Maintain a secure base of support and balance with feet shoulder width apart.

Hold a weighted object in both hands (bottles of water are ideal), remaining unsupported.

Begin with arms straight before leading with the shoulder blade to pull the weight up, until your elbow is in line with your torso.

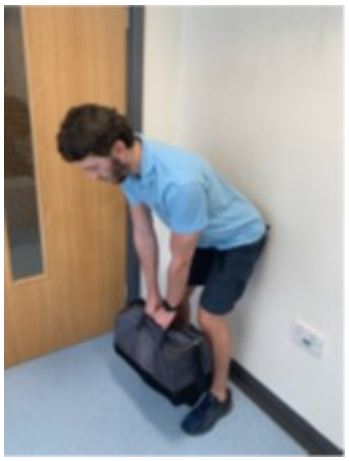


Move the shoulder blades back, feeling the muscles between your shoulder blades working.

Slowly lower the weight down towards ground, straightening the arm. Then repeat.

Repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions.





1. Romanian Deadlift / RDL (Moderate Weight)

Stand upright, feet shoulder width apart and a slight bend in both knees.

Hold some form of moderate weight in your hands, this could be a bar, kettlebell or even just a bag with bottles of water in.

Slowly lower the weight, bending at the hips with back remaining straight.

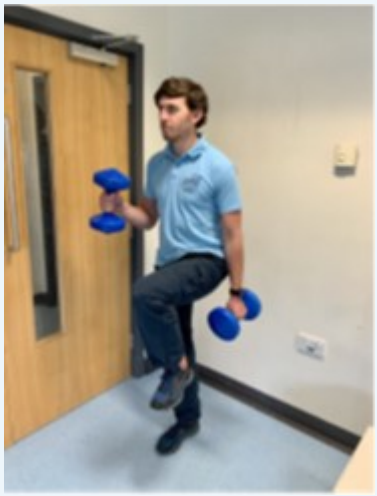
Lower until you feel a slight stretch on the muscles at the back of the thigh.

Drive hips forwards to return to the upright position, squeezing your buttocks.

Make sure to stabilise through your core during the entire exercise.

Repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions.





1. Standing Knee Raises (Counter-Weighted)

Stand upright, hands holding small - moderate weights down by side, and spine in a neutral position. Water bottles can be used if no weights available.

Contract/tighten your deep core muscles by pulling your tummy button in, before you start the movement.

Lift your knee upwards to 90°, pause for 2 seconds at the top of the movement.

At the same time as you lift the knee: with the opposite arm, perform a bicep curl, pausing at 90°, then slowly lower back down to starting position.

Switch and repeat to the other side. Keep switching sides with each repetition, so the movement resembles a slow and controlled marching action.

Keep deep core muscles contracted throughout the whole of the movement.

Repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions.



1. Wood Chops (Weighted with Lunge)

Start with a small weight (e.g. bag of sugar) before progressing onto moderately weighted objects as able.

Keep deep core muscles contracted (pull your tummy button in) throughout the whole of the movement.

Starting with elbows straight; the starting position is with chosen weighted object in the centre.

Lunge forward, bending both knees so that the knee almost touches the floor. Keep your body weight over the front leg and do not allow the knee to move forwards of the toes.

Bring the weight to the same side as leading leg (shown in 1st photo).



Then move the weight over your head to the opposite side as you step back out of the lunge.

Repeat 10 times, then switch legs.



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