



ORTHOPEDIC ASSOCIATES of HARTFORD

50 Years of Excellence

McKENZIE EXTENSION PROGRAM

Home Exercises

Low back pain affects nearly everyone at some stage of active adult life and is one of the most common ailments. It is often described as fibrositis, slipped disk, lumbago, arthritis in the back, or rheumatism and, when it causes pain extending into the leg, sciatica.

Pain can arise in the low back from prolonged overstretching of the ligaments in this area. Pain produced by overstretching in this manner is common and arises particularly when we develop poor postural habits. Whenever we remain in a relaxed position, whether standing, sitting, or lying, prolonged overstretching can easily occur.

The most common cause of low back pain is postural stress. This type of low back pain is frequently brought on by sitting for a long time in a poor position, prolonged forward bending in bad working positions, awkward or heavy lifting, or standing and lying for a long time in a poor position. In these positions, you will typically find that the low back is rounded.

LYING FACE DOWN

Lie face down with your arms beside your body and your head turned to one side.

Staying in this position, take a few deep breaths, and then relax completely for two or three minutes. Make a conscious effort to remove all tension from the muscles in your low back, hips, and legs. Without this complete relaxation, there is no chance of eliminating any distortion that may be present in the joint.



LYING FACE DOWN IN EXTENSION

Remain lying down.

Place your elbows under your shoulders so that you lean on your forearms. During this exercise, as with Exercise 1, commence by taking a few deep breaths and then allow the muscles in the low back, hips, and legs to relax completely. Remain in this position for two to three minutes.



EXTENSION IN LYING

Remain lying face down, and then place your hands under your shoulders in the press-up position.

As you straighten your elbows, push the top half of your body up as far as pain permits. It is important that you completely relax the pelvis, hips, and legs as you do this, and remember to keep breathing normally.

Keep your pelvis, hips, and legs hanging limp and allow your low back to sag.

Maintain this position for a second or two, then lower yourself to the starting position.

Repeat this movement cycle in a smooth rhythmical motion, extending your back as much as possible.

Repeat this exercise 10 times per session, and evenly spread six to eight sessions throughout your day.



EXTENSION IN STANDING

Stand upright with your feet slightly apart, then place your hands in the small of your back with the fingertips pointing backward so that they meet in the center of your spine.

Bend your trunk backward at the waist as far as you can, using your hands as a pivot point. It is important that you keep the knees straight as you do this.

Maintain this position for a second or two, then return to the starting position. Repeat this movement cycle, trying to bend backward a little further each time.



HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE EXERCISING CORRECTLY:

You are exercising correctly and in the right direction when:

- Pain centralizes (moves from your leg, buttock, or side toward the middle of your low back)
- Pain intensity gradually decreases
- Your range of movement increases

You are exercising incorrectly and in the wrong direction when:

- Pain moves away from the spine
- Pain intensity increases and remains worse
- Your range of motion decreases