

Back Exercises

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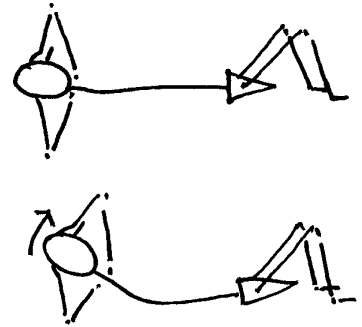
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Sit ups

Whilst resting on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor, interlace your hands behind your neck and gently lift your head and upper torso to a position of 8 inches above the ground. Whilst you do this breath out. Hold the position for a few seconds and then gently lower your head and upper back to return to the starting position whilst breathing in. **Repeat 5 times**



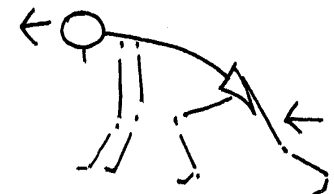
Pelvic tilts

Whilst resting on your back, tense your buttocks whilst gently rocking your pelvis. If this exercise is done correctly the hollow of your back should diminish and come into contact with the surface that you are resting on. **Repeat 5 times**



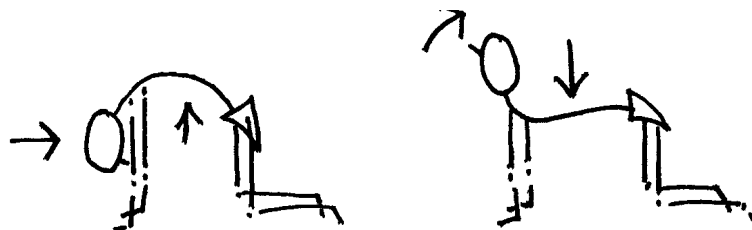
Squats

Place both your hands on a firm surface with both knees slightly bent and one leg placed behind the other. Gently bend both knees at the same time whilst gently moving the whole body forwards. **Repeat 5 times**



The cat exercise

Whilst resting on both your hands and knees, arch the spine whilst tucking your head gently under your body. Breath out. Then arch the back in the opposite direction whilst gently lifting your head. Breath in.



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Upper Back Exercises

1. Stand with your arms by your sides. Slowly rotate both shoulders forwards and backwards, making sure that the movement is mainly from the shoulder blades and not the shoulder joints.

2. Next, still standing with your arms by your sides, breath in whilst drawing your shoulders up to your ears and breath out whilst letting your shoulders relax and lower.

3. Lift your arms in front of you, keeping your elbows bent, and interlink your fingers. Bow your head slightly. Making sure that you keep your elbows bent at all times, push your arms forwards so that you feel a stretch between your shoulder blades. Hold this for a few seconds and then return. Repeat this exercise, and try to hold the stretch for a few seconds longer each time.

4. Put your arms behind you and interlink your fingers. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, hold for a few seconds and then relax and release your hands.

5. Cross your arms over your chest and hold onto your shoulders, making sure that your elbow points are together. Lift up your elbows slightly and slowly draw small circles in the air with your elbows. This will bring about movement in the area of the back between your shoulderblades. As you repeat the exercise, try to enlarge the circles, making sure that it is always a slow and deliberate movement. You can try other shapes too, such as a figure of eight!

6. With your arms still crossed over your chest, holding onto your shoulders as before, rotate your trunk slowly one way then the other, pausing at the end of your range on either side.

Lower Back Exercises

These exercises may be done just before going to bed, to relieve tension in the back before sleep, or first thing in the morning before getting out of bed. They should be done slowly, using discomfort as a guide of how far to stretch.

N.B. The starting position for all the following exercises is lying on your back with your knees bent up.

1. Slide your hands in the gap between the bed and the natural curve in the lower back. Push your back down onto your hands, so that your pelvis tilts back, lifting your buttocks slightly off the bed. Hold for a few seconds and then slowly release. Repeat several times.

2. Return to the starting position, with your knees bent up and feet flat on the bed or mat. Take hold of one knee and draw it slowly up to your chest. Hold it in this position for a few seconds and then release your leg, returning it to the starting position. Repeat this exercise several times with each leg.

3. Take hold of both knees and draw them up to your chest so that you can feel a stretch across your lower back up to a point of slight discomfort. Hold in this position for a few seconds and then ease off that point, whilst still holding on to your knees. Repeat several times, until you can easily draw your knees up to your chest without discomfort. When you finish this exercise, let each leg down to the starting position one by one.

4. Keeping both knees and feet together, slowly sway your knees from side to side. Start with a small range of movement and then increase it until your thighs touch the bed on either side.