

Lower Back Stretches

Always move slowly when doing stretches.
You should never feel pain!

Hip stretches often help relieve lower back pain.
Abdomina/core strengthening can be helpful as well.



Lower Back Flatten/Arch

1



1) Lie on your back with your knees bent, your feet flat on the floor, your hands relaxed on your sides and your head resting on floor. Inhale deeply.

2



2) Begin to exhale and slowly tighten your abdominal muscles so the small of your back lies flat on the floor.

3



3) Exhale and simultaneously arch the small of your back off the floor.

Breathe: Work into a rhythm so you exhale with each flatten and inhale through each arch for a series of breaths.

EXPLORE: Explore arching and flattening your back bringing awareness to the curves of the lower back. Imagine a clock on your belly with 12:00 on your stomach and 6:00 on your lower pelvis. Slowly rock from 12:00 (with an exhale) to 6:00 (with an inhale) trying to make each movement as smooth as possible. Now try rocking from 3:00 (your left side) to 6:00 (your right side). Make clockwise circles for a number of breaths, then reverse and make counter-clockwise circles. Notice your areas of tension and where you have the biggest challenge transitioning from position to position.

Lower Back Stretch Knees to Chest



1) Lie on your back with your hands on your right knee and your left leg extended in front of you. Relax your head on the floor. Pull your right knee toward your chest and elongate your sacrum and spine as you stretch your lower back. Try to push your lower back to floor by contracting your stomach muscles.

Reverse: Reverse and repeat this stretch position with your left leg.



2) Next, grasp both knees and slowly pull them toward your chest. Keep your lower back and head on the floor. Breathe through this position while you stretch your lower back. Continue holding this position as you slowly rock from side to side. Your hips will slightly lift off the ground. Finally, make clockwise circles with your knees. Start small and gradually make the circles larger. This will gently massage your lower back.

Reverse: Reverse the movement and make counter-clockwise circles.



3) In same position as #2, pull both knees toward your right shoulder to stretch the left side of the lower back. Explore placing your right arm out to the side to maintain balance and increase the stretch.

Reverse: Reverse and repeat this stretch position by pulling your knees toward your left shoulder.

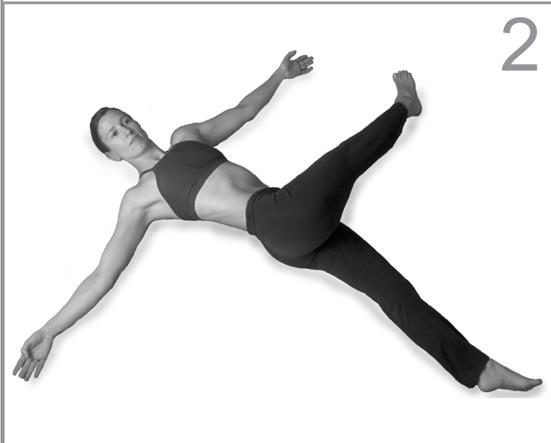
Breathe: Continue breathing deeply through each sequence. When holding a stretch position, take 3 deep breaths while relaxing into each exhale as you stretch a little further.

Lower Back Floor Twists



1

1) Lie on your back with your arms out to your side and your right leg actively pointed toward the ceiling.



2

2) Continue reaching up with your right leg as you extend it across your body to the left until you feel a stretch through your lower back and spine. Your right hip/pelvis will roll off the floor slightly.

EXPLORE: In figure #3, explore moving your right leg closer to your head or closer to your left toes to stretch different muscle fibers. Find the angle of stretch that works best for you.



3

3) Turn your head to the right as you keep your arms pressed to the floor and your right leg outstretched.

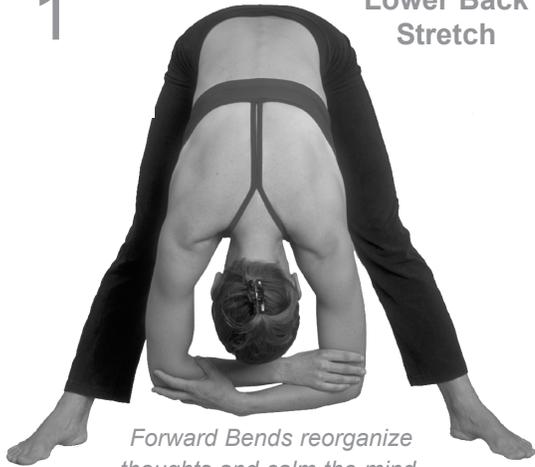
Breathe: Hold this stretch for 3 deep breaths. Relax into each exhale while releasing tension and stretching a little further.

Reverse: Reverse and stretch the opposite side.

Standing Lower Back Stretch & Arch

1

Lower Back Stretch



Forward Bends reorganize thoughts and calm the mind.

1) Stand with your legs twice shoulder width apart and out-toe slightly. Slowly bend your torso forward with a straight back and elongate your spine by reaching through the crown of your head. When you bend as far as you can with a straight back, release your back and bend between your legs. It may help to widen your stance slightly.

For your hand placement, either reach behind and through your legs or grasp your ankles with your hands or cross your arms in front of you (as shown) and allow their weight to stretch you further.

2

Lower Back Arch



Back Bends increase energy and help relieve stress & fatigue.

2) Place your hands on your hips and slowly raise your torso by curling from your lower back, lifting one vertebrae at a time as you rise to a standing position. Slightly arch backward with your chest and head and focus on elongating the front of your spine. Relax your glutes (buttocks) while arching backward.

Breathe: Hold this stretch for 3 deep breaths. Relax into each exhale while releasing tension and stretching a little further.

Muscles Stretched: Opens and elongates the spine and all anterior and posterior torso muscles. This is a great warm-up for your back!

CAUTION!!! Transition cautiously and slowly while bending and rising. If dizziness, pain or discomfort occurs, discontinue the stretch. To avoid slipping, wear shoes or use a yoga mat.

Seated Lower Back Stretch



1) Sit on the floor with good posture and your knees bent slightly wider than your hips. This will avoid stretching the hamstring muscles on the back of your legs.

Tip: If you feel a stretch in the back of your legs, try bending your knees further. Also, refer to the section on hamstring stretches to loosen those muscles.



2) Sit up straight and elongate your spine toward the ceiling. Continue to stretch up as you slowly lean forward between your legs, keeping your back straight. Stop when you feel you've reached your endpoint.

Breathe: Hold this stretch for 3 deep breaths. Relax into each exhale while releasing tension and stretching a little further.



3) From here, allow your back to form a "C" as you reach toward your toes and relax. The weight of your head will help to accentuate the curve in your back. Curl your back instead of crunching your stomach.

EXPLORE: In figure #3, explore utilizing a partner (their hands on your lower back) to gently push up your spine and slightly forward to increase the stretch and elongate your spine.

Seated Lower Back PNF Stretch

1



PNF Stretch: (stretch-resist-stretch)

To increase muscle length, follow these steps:

1) First stretch your back as shown on the previous page. Then reach for your feet without straining and grab your feet with your hands. Hold on and pull back as you begin to sit upright out of the stretch until your arms are straight. Continue to resist against your straightened arms and hold for 6-10 seconds maintaining a relaxed breath. Be sure to hold this position without any movement once you begin resisting.

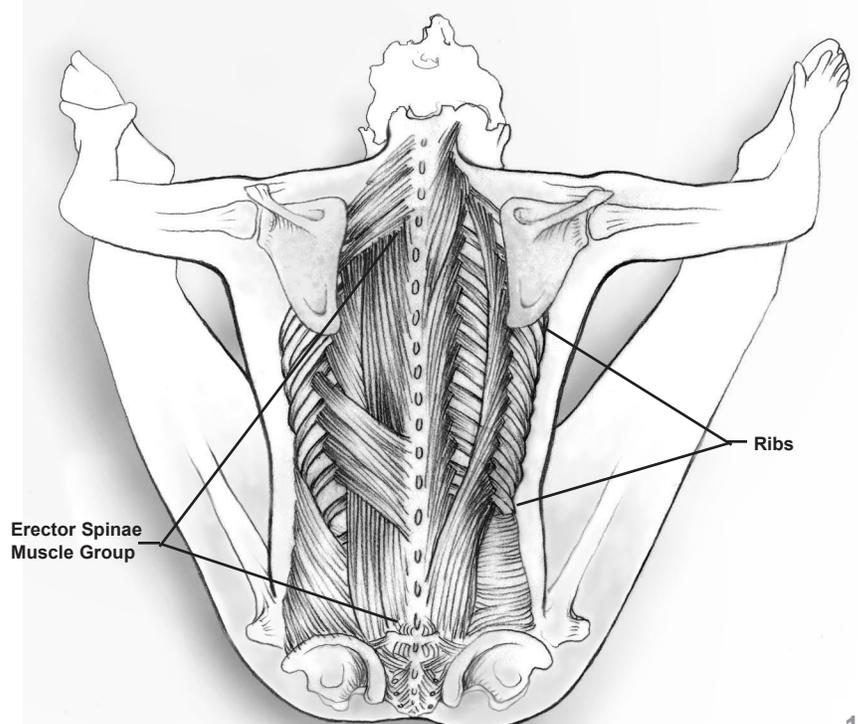
2



2) After holding the stretch, relax for 2 seconds and then stretch between your legs. Be sure to sit up straight and elongate your spine before bending forward between your legs (as described on the previous page).

Do you notice that you can stretch further than before?

Muscles Stretched: Opens and elongates the spine and all back muscles, especially the erector spinae group.



Lower Back Waves

spine in "neutral" position

1

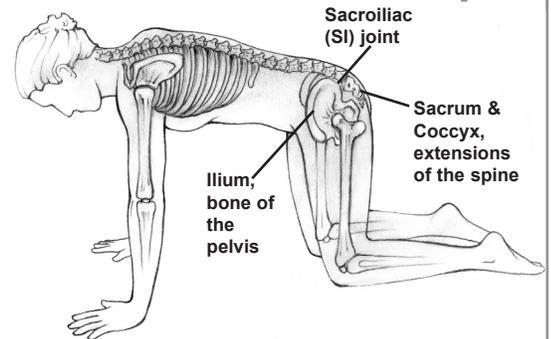


1) Kneel on your hands and knees. Stack your knees under your hips and your wrists under your shoulders. Keep your shoulders relaxed throughout the stretch.

Use a towel under your knees if you have discomfort. If this position still causes knee pain, discontinue and utilize a different sequence.

spine in "neutral" position

1



back of spine elongates

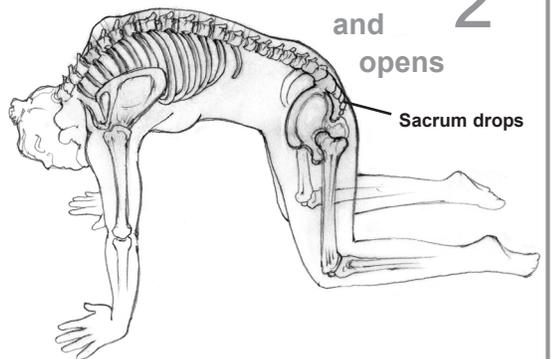
2



2) Simultaneously lower your head and hunch your back curling your tailbone toward the floor. Straighten your arms to increase the stretch in your back. Pretend you're a cat on Halloween as you exhale.

back of spine elongates

2



and opens

front of spine elongates and opens

3

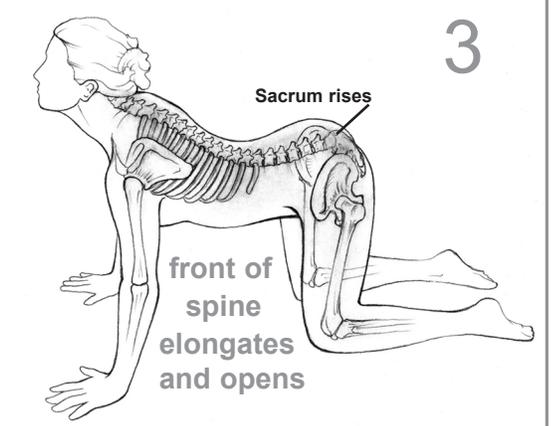


3) Now let your lower back slowly sag toward the floor as you rotate your tailbone and head upward. Feel the movement in your spine, lower back and sacrum with each wave as you inhale.

Are your shoulders relaxed?

front of spine elongates and opens

3



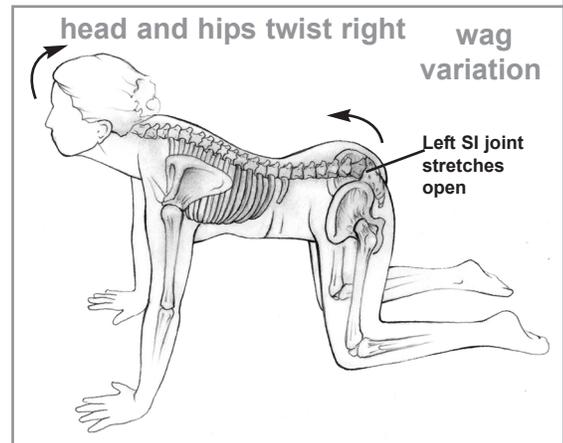
Breathe: Work into a rhythm so you exhale with each hunch and inhale through each sag for a series of breaths.

Lower Back Waves and Wag Variation

The lower back waves/wag sequence is a wonderful warm-up for the spine. It encourages spinal elongation and movement of the sacrum independently from the pelvis. Movement through this sequence will assist you in identifying tight and restricted areas of your body.

Below is a variation on figure 3 of the waves on the previous page. This “wag” position opens your SI (sacroiliac) joints and stretches your lower back.

EXPLORE: After completing the sequence of waves, stay in position #3. Explore twisting your head toward your right hip as you bring your right hip toward your head. Hold this position and visualize holding your head and “tail” toward each other in this this “wag” position . Be sure to reverse this position and stretch the other side. This will stretch your SI joints.



Lower Back Stretch Quadratus Lumborum

1



1) Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and arms at your side. Begin leaning to your left side as you track your left hand toward your knee. Relax your head.

2a



front view

2) When you feel a good stretch on your right side, begin to twist your left shoulder forward until your left hand is hanging over your big toe. Your hips should remain facing forward, only twist with your upper body and shoulder. Then, allow your head to relax as your body weight stretches you further. You will feel this stretch on the right side of your lower back.

2b



side view

Breathe: Hold this stretch for 3 deep breaths. Relax into each exhale while releasing tension and stretching a little further.

Reverse: Reverse and stretch the opposite side.

back view



Muscles Stretched: You will feel this stretch on the right side of your lower back and specifically in the Quadratus Lumborum muscle.

