

Back Exercises

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Lower Back Extension (McKenzie) Stretch

This stretch is sometimes used to help settle low back pain, to improve flexibility for back stiffness, or to stretch out after sitting or bending for too long. It is often called the *McKenzie exercise*, after the New Zealand physiotherapist Robin McKenzie. He first described this exercise, in particular to help certain patients with acute disc injuries.

Exercise

Lie flat on your stomach, on the floor or other firm surface. Put your arms in a 'push-up position', hands next to shoulders and elbows out wide.

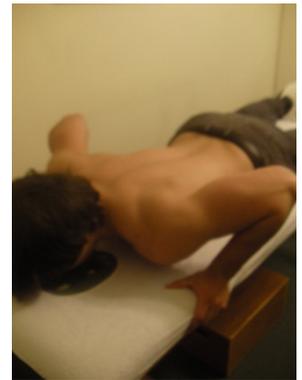
Have your legs slightly apart. Keep your lower back, buttock and leg muscles relaxed. Pushing from the shoulders, lift the top half of your body, but leave your stomach on the floor. In this way, you are attempting to extend (arch) into your low back region. The most you should feel is pressure, but not pain in your low back.

Hold this position for 1 to 2 seconds, then slowly lower. Make sure your arms support you all the way down, otherwise you will tense up through your back muscles. Relax for 1 to 2 seconds, and arch upwards again. Repeat this sequence 10 to 15 times.

Do this exercise as many times per day as recommended by your physiotherapist. The instruction will often be to repeat the exercise every 2 hours.

Points to note

- This stretch should not increase your back pain, and certainly should not produce or increase pain into either leg. If this occurs, stop the exercise and contact your physio.
- Sometimes you will be instructed to hold the stretch for longer than 2 seconds. If uncertain, check with your physio.



If you would like a printable copy of this exercise, please email us at: info@cssphysio.com.au

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