

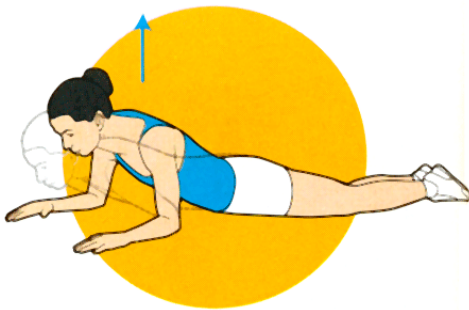
BACK-SAVER WORKOUT

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Unfortunately, all those high-impact moves that are so good for bone health are also hard on our joints. And sports that involve twisting and bending may make us back patients. The trick is to balance strength with flexibility in your hips, back, abs and thighs.

Michele S. Olson, PhD, a professor of exercise science at Auburn University, in Montgomery, Alabama, recommends Pilates to strengthen your core and keep your body aligned. With care, there's no downside to a core-stabilizing and flexibility program. If you are pain-free, consider this program, **designed by Pamela Morrison Wiles, DPT, a physical therapist in New York**. If you're in pain, work with a PT to determine which moves are right for you.

PRESS UP



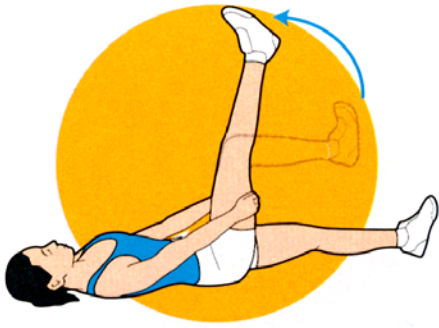
Takes pressure off low back, relieves stiffness in lower spine and in hips Lie facedown on the floor. (Put a pillow under your hips if you have pain when lying flat.) Place your hands on both sides of your face, palms down, elbows tucked close to your torso. Keep your hips down as you press your head and shoulders up; rest on your elbows. Hold for 10 seconds, breathing, then lower slowly. When this gets too easy, lift onto your hands so there is more curve in your lower back. Do three sets of 10 repetitions.

CAT AND COW POSE



Improves mobility, stretches back and abs. Start on your hands and knees, back flat, hands directly below your shoulders, fingers spread, knees under hips. Exhaling, tighten abs and curl your back like a cat, tucking your pelvis, rounding your shoulders, and lowering your head to look at your knees. Inhaling, reverse the pelvic tilt and arch your back, bringing your head up to look forward. Repeat 10 times slowly, moving each section of your spine individually.

HAMSTRING KICK



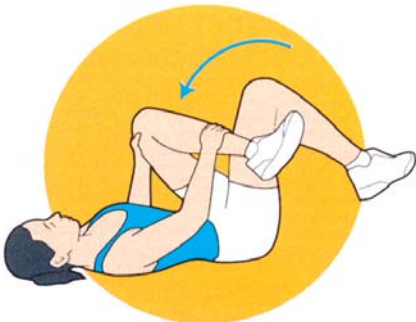
Stretches hamstring and calf, and eases sciatic nerve pain. Lie flat on your back. Lift your right leg so the knee is directly over the hip, foot flexed. Using both hands, hold your thigh to lock your leg in place. Keeping your foot flexed, slowly try to straighten your leg. Stop when you feel a gentle pull behind your knee or calf. Point and flex your toes. Hold for 10 seconds. Bend knee slightly; repeat 10 times. Repeat with other leg.

CROSSED CHILD POSE



Stretches the mid and low back Starting on your hands and knees, sit back onto your heels and lower your forehead to the floor, stretching your arms along the floor above your head, elbows lifted. Hold for 30 seconds. Walk your hands to the left, letting your hips shift to the right as your back forms a curve. End by crossing your right hand over the left as far as you can. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Reverse directions and repeat. Do the entire sequence five times.

HIP OPENER



Stretches a deep muscle in the hip and buttocks that can cause sciatica pain. Lie on your back, knees bent, feet flat on floor. Place your left ankle on your right thigh, just above the knee. Place your right hand on your left ankle and grasp your left knee with the other hand. While flexing your right foot, pull your left knee toward your left shoulder. Press up with the right knee to enhance the stretch. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat on the other side, then hug both knees to your chest. Do five reps on each side.