



BODY MIND YOGA  
PERTH

## Lower back

Lower back pain can be caused by a number of different things. It may be an injury to the spine or muscles, it may be caused by tightness in the leg, lower back, glutes or hip flexor muscles, or it can be caused through weak muscles in the legs, abdominals, glutes or lower back. The following exercises help to stretch and strengthen the muscles around the lower back.

If lower back pain is strong and/or persistent or there has been an injury, it is advisable to see an osteopath, physiotherapist or chiropractor for assessment. It is not always appropriate to do yoga – at least until the condition has settled down. Yoga is certainly a good preventative and can keep mild conditions in check, but anything more serious should be looked at first.

**Note:** Always do the exercises slowly and gently. Listen to your body, never push into pain and remember to breathe. Its best to build up strength gradually, so start with the easy options and as strength and flexibility improve you can move onto the more challenging moves.

**See also:** glutes information sheet and abdominal strengthening information sheet.

### LYING DOWN

**1. Knees side to side:** Have the legs in semi supine, knees bent with the feet flat on the floor and approximately shoulder width apart. Bring the arms out wide into cross position. As you breathe out, slowly take your knees down to one side; as you breathe in, come back to the centre and then breathe out to the other side...continue from side to side like that.

**2. Circling knees over the chest:** Bring the knees up above the chest and hold onto them with the hands and slowly guide the knees in circles over the chest so that you make circles on the floor with the lower back...go in both directions.

**3. Lifting the head:** Start by breathing out and pressing your lower back to the floor; then breathing in and arching your lower back away from the floor, tilting pelvis back and forth...then as you exhale and press the lower back to the floor, lift the head up. Put the head down as you breathe in...you can go further by drawing the knees over the chest as you lift the head up.

4. **Shoulder bridge:** Remain in semi supine, but have the feet about hip width apart. Rest your arms beside you with the palms facing downwards. Breathe in as you press into the floor with the feet and lift the hips a little off the floor; breathe out back down. If that's fine for your lower back then gradually lift the hips up higher and higher...to strengthen more into the glutes (buttocks) press into the floor more with the heels....Once you are comfortable with this you can hold the position for a few breaths.
5. **Apanasana:** Rest the hips and buttocks down on the floor draw the knees over the chest. As you breathe out slowly draw the knees in toward the chest, then let them move away from the chest as you breathe in. If your neck is fine, as you draw the knees into the chest you could tuck the chin in and roll the head up.
6. **Sciatic release:** From semi supine, bring the right knee over the chest and hold underneath with the right hand. Have the left hand behind the head. As you breathe out slowly straighten the right leg up toward the ceiling as you lift the head up; breathe in back down...go up and down a few times then swap sides.
7. **Circling leg:** Have the right knee over the chest again and hold under the knee with both hands. Lift the foot up toward the ceiling so the leg is comfortably straight and use the hands to slowly circle the leg as you breathe easily. Go first in one direction and then the other...swap legs.
8. **Knees over the chest and rocking from side to side:** Hold onto the knees with the hands and take them slightly side to side...then have the hands on the insides of the knees and press the knees wide apart and roll side to side like that...bring knees together and draw them in and out of the chest a few times.
9. **Double leg lifts:** Have legs in semi supine with feet and knees close together. Arms can either be beside you or hands tucked under the buttocks for support. As you breathe out slowly lift the feet off the floor, straighten the legs toward the ceiling as you pull the tummy in. Breathe in, back down...if that's easy and you don't have a lower back problem, keep the legs straight for the whole movement.

## STANDING

10. **Pushing ankles and knees away from each other:** Stand with your feet close together (inch or two apart) and have your arms relaxed beside you. Breathe in and push your ankles and knees away from each other (keeping your feet where they are). Hold that tightness for a second or two before breathing out and relaxing. Repeat 5 more times...shake legs out.

11. **Dynamic reverse triangle:** Stand with your feet wide apart and have your arms wide to either side level with the shoulders. As you breathe out lean forward and touch one hand to the opposite knee; inhale back up; then swap sides on the next out breath. Continue like that letting your breath guide the movement. If that's easy, you can touch the hand further down the leg even to the opposite foot or to the floor on the outside of the foot. The strengthening aspect here occurs as you are coming back up to centre – take care with your lower back though, pain means you are going too far.
12. **Cleansing breath:** Inhale and float both arms up above the head; exhale down, bend the knees and lean forward from the waist. Go up and down like that...then hold leaning forward from the waist and breathe...keeping your chin tucked in, slowly roll back up to standing, bringing the head up last.

## LYING ON THE FRONT

13. **Locust:** Lie on your front with the legs hip width apart and arms out long in front of you. Breathe in and lift one arm and the opposite leg off the floor. Also lift the head slightly, but keep your face looking down at the floor so the neck is in a straight line. Exhale down and swap sides. Alternate sides a few times and if that is easy then do both legs and both arms together. When that is easy you can hold the position and breathe.
14. **Child pose:** You can either rest your forehead on the floor with the arms stretched out long in front of you or rest your forehead on your fists. Watch the breath.



**Resting on your back and circling knees over the chest:** Then take 1-5 minutes to lie there as you breathe in and expand the belly; breathe out and relax your whole body.