

Healing Low Back Pain with Chinese Medicine

Low back pain is a common challenge that affects people of all ages, and is caused by a variety of health and lifestyle factors. Low back muscles provide structural support, help the body move freely, and offer essential protection for the body's organs and tissues. With a minimal amount of regular, low impact, targeted exercise, you can dramatically improve your quality of life by reducing or eliminating chronic low back pain.

Chinese medicine offers a mind-body approach to pain

In Chinese medicine, it is recommended to keep your lower back warm and free from damp conditions. This could mean avoiding swimming in very cold water, sweating or exposure to cold air. Taiji or qigong movements provide a pathway for gentle, peaceful movement that incorporates deep breathing and slow, thoughtful balancing techniques. Taiji and qigong practices provide an added benefit of deep relaxation of the mind and body.

When in pain, Stop... and take action

When you recognize low back pain occurring, it is vitally important to cease any action or physical movement that may be causing the pain. Consult your health practitioner to determine the best course of action for your situation. By working with a provider, you can create a realistic recovery plan based upon your individual needs and circumstances. Once the source of pain has been identified, a course of action, including simple exercises that target the sources of the pain, can be implemented to create the best long-term results.

Be aware of any movement that stresses the back

If you are experiencing low back pain it is advised that you *do not* engage in any exercise in which you move the leg away from the body, such as deep squats or running, and any quick movements, such as jumping or those that involve lifting while twisting.

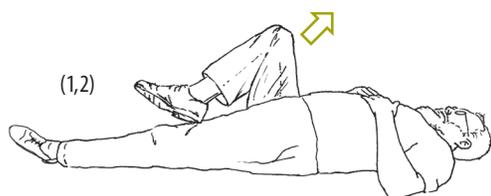
Some exercises that may help you heal

Several exercises have been shown to gently strengthen the muscles in the low back, including walking in the shallow end of a pool, riding a bicycle in easy gears, or swimming using a gentle kicking motion. Exercises that strengthen the knees, ankles and core abdominal muscles may also be helpful. The following are two simple home exercises you can do to stretch and strengthen your low back.

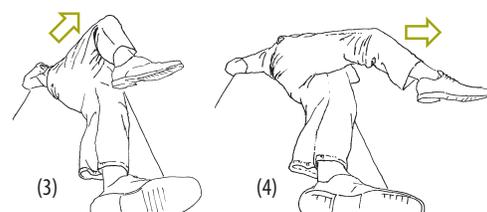
Exercise #1

1) Lie flat on your back on a stable and smooth surface such as the floor.

2) Raise your right leg, bending the knee. Raise knee until perpendicular with left hip.



3) and 4) Keeping your back and shoulders flat on the ground, cross your right leg over the left leg.



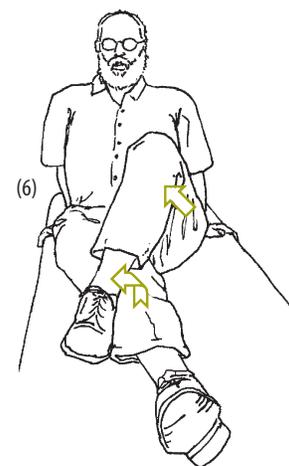
5) Rest in this stretch for 10-30 seconds. Then repeat with the left leg.



Exercise #2

6) Sit on a flat surface such as the floor, with legs extended. Raise the left knee, then cross the left leg over the right knee.

7) Extend your left arm and press it against the inner part of your left knee. Keeping as upright as possible, without leaning back or forward, rotate your spine to face away from the knee and extended arm. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat with the other leg.



Both sets of exercises can be done in sets of 1-3 repetitions.

Put yourself first... today and every day

Today is a great day to embark on a gentle exercise regimen designed to decrease your pain, improve your health and enrich your life. Remember, healing your low back pain is a personal process which is best approached with the oversight of a health care practitioner. Combining exercise with acupuncture and herbal medicine to help you heal is the best path to personal well-being.



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