

If these stretches or exercises cause any sharp pain, or aggravate your lower back for longer than a day afterwards, follow the ice/heat advice below and contact the clinic.

Stretches

Stretches should be held as long as you feel comfortable (short bursts if painful, and hold longer if comfortable) with at least **5-10 seconds rest** in between. **Do not bounce** at the end range as this may cause irritation.

Stretches can be repeated as many times as preferable, however, if doing exercises and stretches it is best to do the stretches after exercise when the muscles have warmed up.

Deep lower back stretch

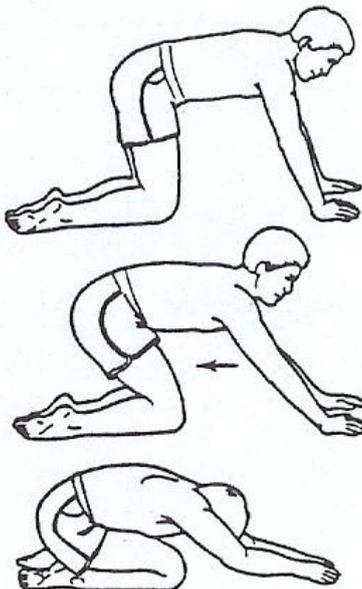
1. Lie flat on your back on the floor with your arms outstretched in-line with your shoulders and your hands flat on the floor
2. Start with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent to about 90 degrees
3. Keeping your knees together, slowly lower them over to one side, keeping both shoulders on the floor whilst twisting at the waist to allow your knees to drop
4. Relax and let your knees hang if they are unable to touch the floor.



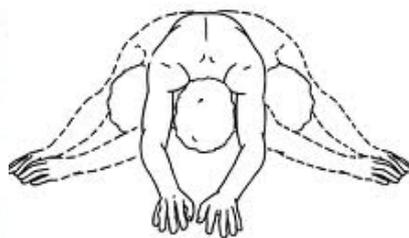
5. To increase the intensity of the stretch bring your top leg over and use your opposite arm to add light pressure directing your knee towards the floor as shown below.



Swan Stretch (Lower and Mid back)

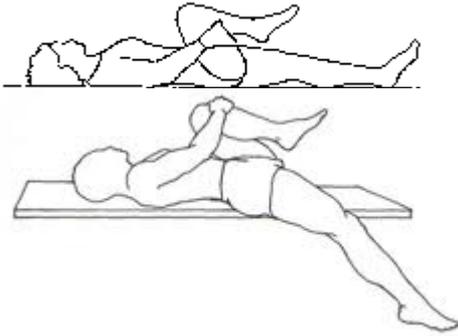


Start on your hands and knees with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Slowly move back to taking your buttocks towards your knees with your arms are stretched out in front. Only go as far as is comfortable and till you feel a good stretch. If you find this difficult due to knee/thigh pain this may mean your quadracep muscles at the front of your thighs are too tight and should also be stretched.



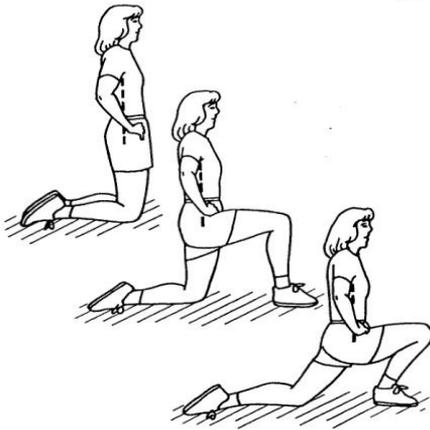
If this becomes easy you can then modify it so that you walk the hands to either side in order to concentrate the stretch to one side or the other.

Hip Flexor



Level 1. Lie on your back on the floor or bed. As shown pull one knee towards your chest and keep the leg you want to stretch flat. You should feel a pull at the front of the straight leg hip/groin. If you find this hard, just hug both knees into your chest and hold.

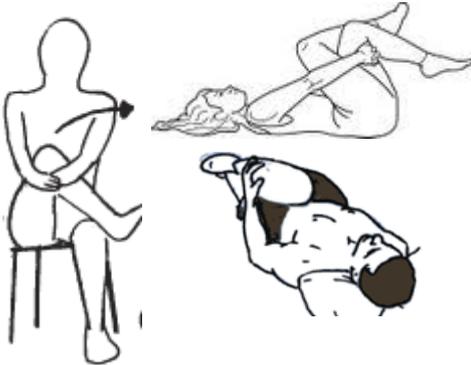
Level 2. To increase the stretch, lower the straight leg off the bed so your foot is on the floor. Move over to that side 2 inches so your hip is slightly off the bed. Then hug the opposite knee to chest again. **Beware of back pain**, stick to level 1 if it aggravates it!



Level 3. Start in kneeling position with your hands on your hips, or holding on to a table/bed frame in front of you to assist balance. Raise *right* foot and place in front of you, kneeling on *left* knee. Lean forward, pushing your hips forward keeping your back straight. Don't let your front knee pass your toes, if it does move your front foot forward. Hold for 5 seconds then slowly return to neutral. Repeat if necessary and then do on the opposite side.

*use a towel/cushion on a carpeted floor (for grip) under your knee if it hurts.

Gluteals and Hip Rotators



Lying down, bring your knee towards your chest as much as you can. Then using the opposite hand, bring your knee across the chest towards the

opposite shoulder and hold. Keep your hips on the floor.

Use your opposite knee to create further tension, or adapt to a seated position as shown.

Buttock stretch



Lying on your back cross the leg of the hip you want to stretch, across the opposite leg with your ankle comfortably just above your kneecap. Try and walk the foot that is on the floor towards your buttock until you feel a stretch.



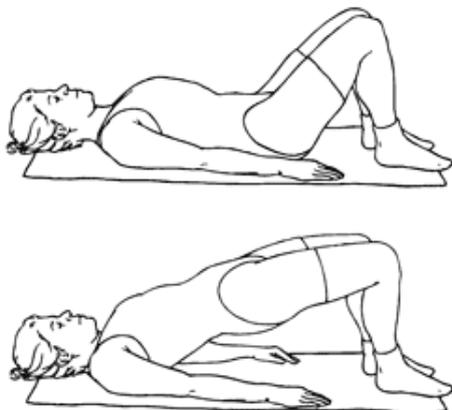
If you cannot feel a stretch at this point, lift your foot from the floor and use your hands to gently pull the supporting thigh towards you. Keep your shoulders and back as relaxed as possible



This can be adapted to sitting in a chair, taking your abdomen towards your calf keeping the back straight and knee as low as comfortable. Find which one you prefer.

Do these exercises in sets of 10, up to 4 x 10. When you can achieve this comfortably with slow and controlled movements try 2 sets of 20, then progress to 1 set of 40. Once you reach 1 set of 40 let me know and we can move on to a more difficult type of exercise.

Supine Bridge



To start get into the position as shown, and ensure your arms are flat down by your sides. Tilt your pelvis up so your lower back flattens against the floor, contract your Gluteus/buttock muscles, and slowly raise your hips towards the ceiling. Avoid over extending your back by raising until your body forms a diagonal line. **Do not** push through your feet or arms as you will not be activating the correct muscle groups. Slowly lower to the ground back to the starting position.

Heat/Ice Advice

For moments of acute pain/injury (first few weeks) it is best to apply an **ice pack** (bag of frozen peas etc), this will slow blood flow and in turn reduce inflammation and pain, hour. **Heat** does the opposite (increases blood flow) and is good for chronic joint pain (arthritis) or muscular pain, using a hot water bottle or wheat bag. Both should be wrapped in kitchen towel/pillow case, to prevent direct contact with the skin, as that can cause heat or ice burns. Apply for **15-20 minutes** on the affected area/s, and this can then be repeated up to around **every 1 hour**. Both should feel comfortable, not painful, if this is the case the packs are either too hot/cold, and a thicker barrier should be used i.e. towel, until the temperature is comfortable but can still be felt.