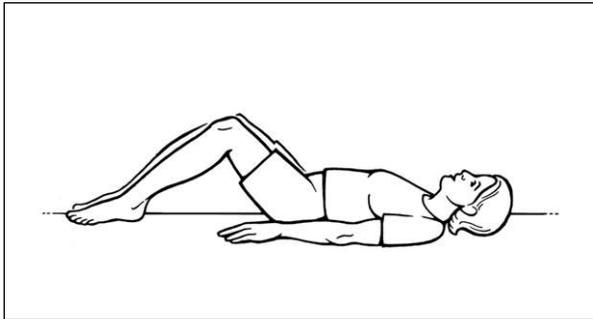**LOW-BACK PAIN**

Exercises for your aching back

The vast majority of people have backaches at some point in life, and more often as they grow older. Your doctor may suggest medications you can take when symptoms bother you, but a regular program of nonstrenuous exercises such as these will be of great help in the long run.
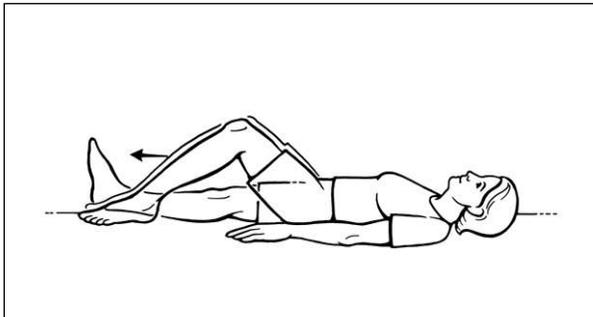

1. Diaphragmatic breathing

Lie on your back, with your knees raised and your feet flat on the floor. Inhale through your nose, and let your belly expand. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Do each of the following exercises gently a few times a day.
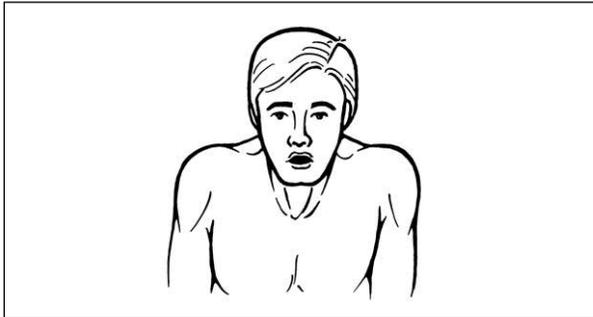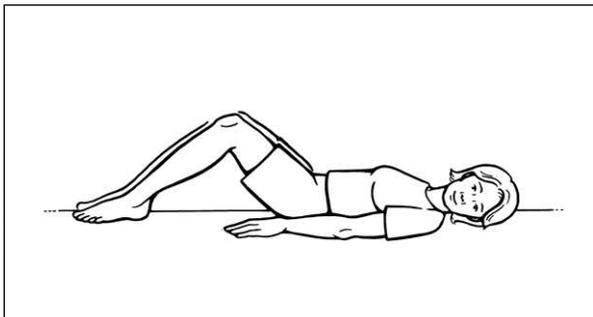

2. Shoulder shrugs

Pull your shoulders up toward your ears. Inhale and exhale as you let go.

3. Leg slides

Slide your leg down to the floor. Relax and let it go. Slide it back up to the basic position. Repeat with the opposite leg.
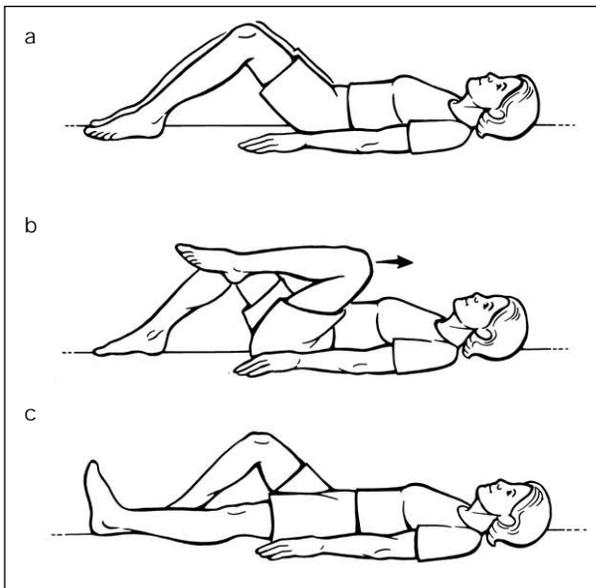

4. Head rotations

Drop your head to the right side, return to the neutral position and let go, then drop the head to the left side and back to center.

ILLUSTRATIONS: KATHRYN BORN

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# Exercises for your aching back *continued*

5. Single knee to chest

Begin in the basic diaphragmatic breathing position, on your back with your knees raised and your feet flat on the floor **(a).** Bring one knee to the chest as far as you comfortably can **(b).** Lower the foot to the floor, then slide your leg down and let it go **(c).** Slide the leg back to the basic position. Repeat with the opposite leg.
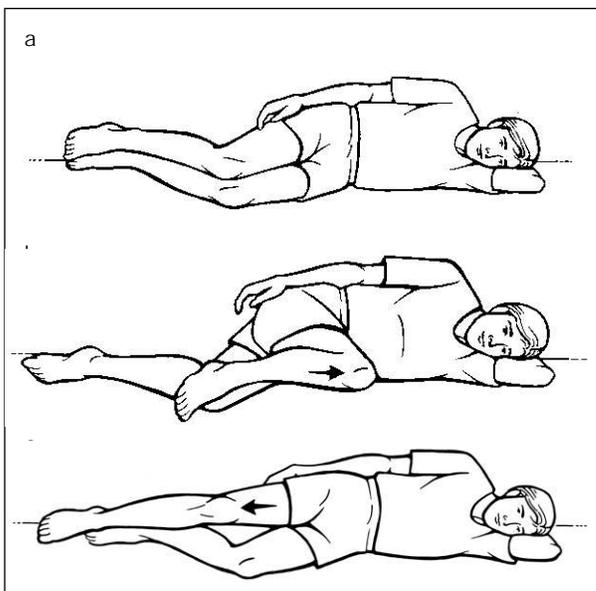
6. Sidelying knee to chest

Lie on your side in the fetal position **(a).** Bring your upper leg toward your chest, letting the knee drop toward the floor like dead weight **(b).** Then slide the leg back, extending the knee **(c)**. Bring the leg back to the starting position and let it go. Do this 3 times, then roll onto your other side and repeat with the opposite leg.
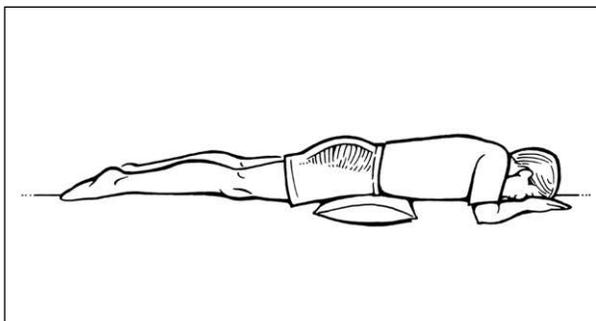
7. Buttocks squeeze

Turn onto your stomach and place a pillow under your belly. Tighten your seat muscles and hold for 2 seconds. Relax and let go.