

## Back pain

The following exercises should be started gently and increased gradually, and you should not try

to push hard to get rid of pain. A little discomfort is common when starting a new activity or exercise, especially if you have not been active for some time, as your joints and muscles get used to working again. Try each exercise in turn and find out how many times you can repeat it without feeling extra discomfort the following day. If you are not sure, try each one 5–10 times to start with. As your back gets used to the new exercise, you should gradually increase the number of times you do the exercise. If you are lucky, you may find a particular exercise eases your pain. If so, you should do more of this exercise and can use it as 'first aid'.

Sometimes you may experience a 'flare-up' or marked increase in pain. This can happen whether you exercise or not. For a couple of days you may be happier reducing the amount you exercise, but try not to stop completely. As the pain eases, try and build back up to the previous level quite quickly.

### Exercises

1. Hugging knees to chest Lying on your back with bent knees, lift one leg and hold on to it with one hand and then lift and hold the other leg. Pull both knees gently closer to your chest, hold for a count of 5, then relax your arms but don't let go completely. Repeat the hug and relax. Some people prefer to hug one knee at a time.
2. Leg stretches Lying on your back with your knees bent, lift one knee and hold your thigh with both hands behind the knee. Gently straighten the knee that you are holding and hold for a count of 5. Repeat with the opposite leg.
3. Half push-ups Lie on your front on a firm surface, with your hands under your shoulders, palms down. Look up and push up, lifting your head and shoulders up with your arms. Keep your hips on the floor. Hold for a count of 5 and then gently lower yourself back down. To start with, you may not be able to lift your shoulders far. As you become more flexible, work towards trying to straighten your arms, still keeping your hips on the floor.
4. Knee rolls Lying on your back with bent knees, let your knees roll to one side, keeping your knees and feet together. Stay to one side for a count of 5 and then roll to the other side
5. Arching and hollowing Start on all fours, hands under shoulders, knees under hips. Arch your back upwards, letting your head drop, and hold for a count of 5. Then reverse this posture: lifting your head and looking up, relax your tummy and stick your behind out, holding for a count of 5.

