

## Lumbar Stretches

These stretches can be performed on the floor or in bed if you have a difficult time getting up and down from the floor.

### 1. The Pelvic Clock



**Hold for 20  
seconds**

**Repeat 2  
times**

**Press your low back  
onto the floor as flat as  
possible, while you  
rotate your pelvis  
clockwise**

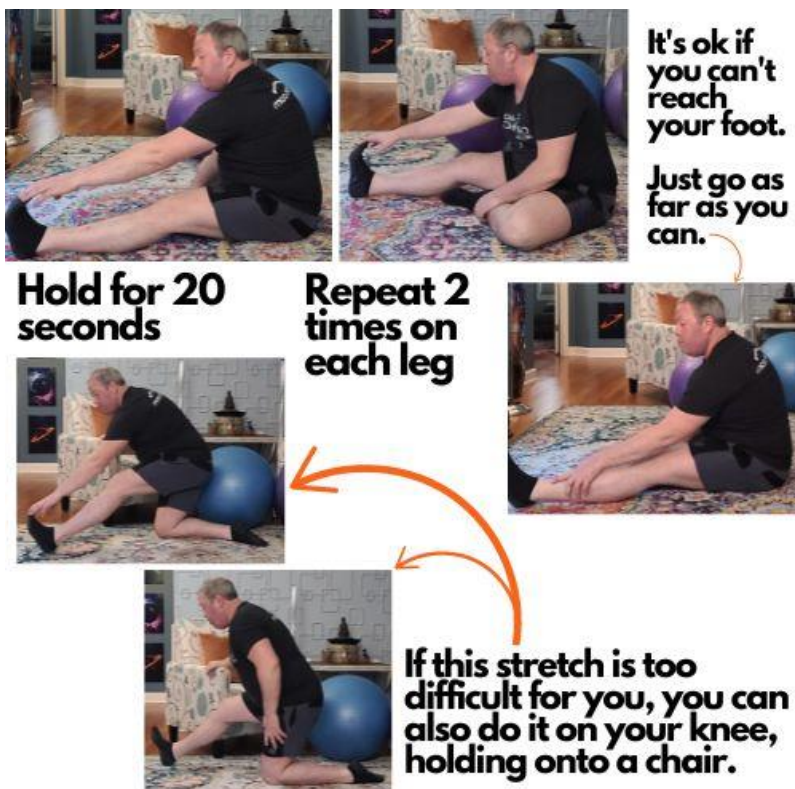
**Purpose:** This exercise has stretching and strengthening benefits. First, as you rotate your hips to the floor, you receive lower back stretching benefits. Second, by rotating and holding that position, your muscles, which move and stabilize your trunk (external obliques) receive strengthening benefits.

**Position:** Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Relax and feel your whole back as it touches the floor.

**Action:** Slowly rotate your hips clockwise, pushing your lower back flat onto the floor. Hold for a count of 20 seconds, perform 2 sets with 5 seconds rest between sets.

**Tip:** When you do this exercise, imagine that the clock is on your left hip, facing away from you (facing the wall to your left). Slowly turn the hands of time by rotating your entire pelvis clockwise, pressing your low back onto the floor as flat as possible. Essentially, you are flattening your low back and lifting your pelvis off the floor at the same time. You should feel your stomach muscles tighten when you do this.

## 2. The Hamstring Stretch



**Purpose:** This exercise stretches and increases the flexibility to the back of the thighs. When stretched properly, healthy hamstrings improve balance and stability when standing and walking.

**Position:** Bend one leg. Keep your back straight and lean forward from the hips with your chin in. *For someone with a herniated disc, it is absolutely imperative that you keep your back straight when you do this stretch!*

**Action:** Stretch slowly. As you lean forward, keep your head, shoulders and complete back in one straight line. Do not “hunch” your back as you lean forward. This will only appear as if you are stretching further. The idea is to get a better stretch, so keep your back straight and relax the target muscles, in this case, the back of your upper leg. Maintain a slow and continual stretch. Keep your leg as straight as possible without jamming the knee joint by pushing down on it. Keep your knee facing up. Perform 2 sets, 20 seconds each.

**Option:** If you find this stretch difficult, you can use a chair for support. Kneel on one knee and extend the other leg straight, slowly lower your body, adding a dynamic stretch to the back of the thigh.

**Tip:** You may wonder why you are stretching your hamstrings when the herniated disc is in your back. The hamstring muscles attach at the bottom of the pelvis. If they are too tight, this pulls down on the pelvis, which adds strain to the discs of the lower back.

### 3. Lower Back Rotators



**Hold for 20  
seconds**

**Repeat 2 times  
on each side**

**Purpose:** This stretch increases flexibility and strengthens the trunk rotator muscles, adding stability and control when walking and turning.

**Position:** Lie flat on your back with the knees bent and palms flat on the floor. *Keep the back and hips flat on the floor throughout this exercise.*

**Action:** Slowly lower your knees to one side, keeping them together. You should feel the muscles stretching from your shoulder down to your lower back. Perform 2 sets, 20 seconds each set.

**Tip:** Once your knees are in the lowered position, don't hold it there! Rather, try to RELAX it there. The more you let gravity stretch by relaxing your legs, the better the stretch.

#### 4. Knee to Chest



**Hold for 20 seconds**

**Repeat 2 times on each side**

**If you can't reach behind your thigh, you can use a towel**



**If you are more flexible and need a deeper stretch, try straightening the knee**

**Purpose:** This exercise stretches muscles in your lower back, hips, and back of the thigh, restoring joint mobility to the trunk area. This stretch benefits both legs at the same time, but different muscles. The straight leg receives hip stretching benefits, while the raised leg stretches the back of your thighs and your lower back.

**Position:** Lie on your back, with both knees bent and your feet flat.

**Action:** Slowly raise one knee to your chest, holding the back of your thigh with your hands. Now straighten your other leg, keeping the knee facing up. Don't lift your head and keep it straight. Alternate legs and hold 20 seconds with each leg. Perform 2 sets.

**Tip:** Use a towel around your thigh if it will make you feel more comfortable. Also, use a pillow under your head if you feel it will help with your positioning.

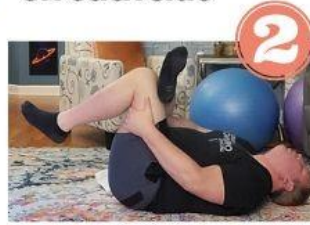


## 5. Figure 4



**Hold for 20 seconds**

**Repeat 2 times on each side**



**If you can't reach behind your thigh, you can use a towel**

**Purpose:** This exercise improves your ability to squat, cross your legs, and helps relieve back pain. You are actually reaching and stretching the muscle closest to sensitive nerves, and this is a particularly good stretch to relieve sciatica. When stretched, it helps relieve pressure around inflamed nerves and lessens lower back pain.

**Position:** Lie flat on your back. Cross one leg over the other, resting the ankle above the opposite knee.

**Action:** Pull up on your thigh and hold. Use a towel around your thigh to aid in pulling if needed. Keep head on floor. Don't over-cross your leg by letting your ankle slide down the opposite leg. Hold 20 seconds and alternate sides. Perform 2 sets with each side.

**Tip:** You can increase the stretch by pushing the elbow down on the opposite knee simultaneously as you pull up. If you feel that you need a deeper stretch and you have the strength and flexibility for this, you can also do a variation called the Pigeon Pose, where you start in a push-up position, bring one leg forward and bend it at the knee, then lay on the bent leg. This will stretch the same muscle in the hip and low back, but you'll get a deeper stretch this way. You would repeat this stretch on both sides.



**If you are more flexible and need a deeper stretch, you can use the Pigeon Pose instead**

**You can also use the Pigeon Pose with your torso upright to stretch the hip flexors on the side the leg is extended behind you**



**You can also use the Pigeon Pose to stretch the hip flexors, which are muscles that start in front of the lumbar spine and attach at the front of the hips. These muscles can cause a lot of problems in the low back and hips if they become too tight. To stretch these, you would go into the pigeon pose, but instead of laying on the leg, you would stay in an upright position. Repeat this stretch on both sides.**