



## Exercises for Back, Hips, Tailbone, & Pelvic Pain

(use only as comfortable and appropriate for your own physical condition)

### Pelvic Floor

**Anal Lock:** This is a simple exercise that everybody can do. It will help stimulate nerves and blood flow as well as tone and strengthen your pelvic area. Doing the exercise correctly will help relieve pain in that tailbone area. Perform this exercise in any position you choose. Simply squeeze your anal sphincter as tight as possible, hold it for 10 seconds and then release. This is the same muscle you would squeeze if you were trying to hold in your stool until you make it to the toilet. Repeat the squeeze three to five times and then take a rest. Do about 10 to 15 sets a day. You can alternate back and forth between this and the Kegel exercise. Both are **best done while squatting!**

The Anal Lock is a variation of the classic **Kegel Exercises** for the pelvic floor: Kegels can be done several times per day, anywhere. The only muscles you want to tighten are the muscles around the vaginal wall, which raises the pelvic floor. They are the same muscles you would use to stop the flow of urine mid-stream. Squat, breathe normally, relax the rest of your body and hips, tighten the vaginal muscles and hold for several seconds, then relax. Repeat 10 times. Add **bicycling standing up**, and you have the exercises needed for maximum pelvic floor conditioning.

### Hip Isotopics (otherwise known as “what a relief!”)

You need a partner for these, but it is absolutely worth it! You can lay flat with your knees bent (best), or sit in a soft chair with feet flat on the floor and slightly apart. Apply and release pressure slowly and gently at all times.

**Part 1:** Have your partner sit facing you and place their forearm between your knees, with one hand against the inside of one knee, and their elbow against the other; this places you in control of the exercise and prevents any sudden pulling on your hips. Try to bring your knees together against the resistance of your partner's arm; you should feel this pull in your pelvis. Hold for 10 seconds and release, repeat 3 times, then alternate with Part 2. You may get a loud pop as one or more of your joints release.

**Part 2:** Have your partner hold your knees together, and you try to pull them apart (directly to each side). Hold 10 seconds then relax; repeat 3 times. Alternate with Part 1 several times.

**Part 3:** Follow up by having your partner wrap their hands softly behind one of your knees, and lean back to apply traction to your leg while you take 3 slow deep breaths and let them all the way out. Repeat on other leg.

### Glutes

You can work on your glutes and the exercises will work into the muscles of lower back. To do a simple glute exercise, get on your hands and knees and extend one leg straight out. With your leg straight, raise it up as far as you comfortably can. Don't move your hips downward as you lift your legs, keep them parallel with the ground. Lower your leg so your toe hits the ground and lift again. Work up very slowly until you are comfortable doing three sets of 15 on each leg. Finish each set with a few minutes resting in a squat, heels near the floor, lower legs almost vertical.

To stretch your glutes and lower back, lay flat on your back and lift your knees into your chest. Hold your legs at the back of your thighs and pull them as far toward your shoulders as is comfortable without pushing directly on baby. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and then release. Remember to spend a few minutes in a squatting position after!

### Pelvic Tilt

The pelvic tilt helps take pressure off of your tailbone while strengthening your pelvic muscles, helping to prevent increased pain. With your knees and palms firmly planted on the floor, keep your back straight and aligned with your neck. Slowly arch your back like a cat, pulling your abdomen in. Hold this pose for the count of 10 and release slowly. Rest in a squatting position for a few minutes afterward. Repeat 10 times per day.

### Cat/Cow Stretch

An extension of the Pelvic Tilt, the purpose of this exercise is to limber and stretch the back and neck muscles, stimulate spinal nerves, align the vertebrae, promote blood flow, and relieve back and neck pain. It makes a good warm-up stretch. Rest in a squatting position for a few minutes afterward.

Start in hands-and-knees position, with hands directly under the shoulders and the knees directly under the hips. Round your back up to the sky (Cat) and then arch your back with your head lifting up (Cow). As the Cat stretch is performed, exhale. As the Cow stretch is performed, inhale. Perform this exercise for one minute. If the hand placement hurts the wrists, make the hands into fists. Pillows help - for knees, too!

### Stretches

**Full-body bend:** Stand with your feet spread hip-width apart and your arms hanging by your side. Drop your chin into your chest and lower your head until your hands reach your knees. Your knees should be slightly bent at this point. If you can bend low enough to put your elbows on your knees, do so; if not, don't worry. With your hands (or elbows) on your knees, slowly straighten out your right leg and allow your left knee to bend further. Feel the stretch and hold it for 15 seconds. Now straighten out your left leg and let your right knee bend. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds.

onds. Keep alternating between legs; do 5-10 stretches with each leg. Never straighten both legs at the same time. Add arm movements to feel a greater stretch. Do this when you're in the position where one leg is straight and one leg is bent. On the same side as your straight leg, lift your arm to the ceiling. You should feel your body twist and hold the stretch. Do this 5 to 10 times on each side.

**Side-Bending stretch:** Stand facing forward, feet slightly apart. Place one palm on the side of your thigh, and very slowly slide it down your leg as you bend directly to that side, only as far as comfortable, hold there for 10 seconds while taking a deep breath and raising your other hand out to the side and up toward the ceiling and lowering it again, then slowly slide back to where you started. Relax for 10 seconds, then repeat on other side. Do this several times. Good for low and mid-back pain.

**Corner stretch:** For releasing tension in the entire body and straightening the posture to balance your weight properly. Stand facing into a corner, place palms one on each wall at shoulder-height, fingers pointed up, feet slightly apart and pointed forward. Do all of these moves very slowly; bend elbows so that you lean into the corner until you feel a mild stretch in your shoulders, then simultaneously raise onto the balls of your feet and look up toward ceiling. Hold for a few seconds, then lower back to flat feet and look forward, hold, then push away from corner to original position. Repeat 5-10 times. Great for neck problems!

## Yoga Child's Pose

The purpose of this exercise is to tone the muscles of the pelvis, stimulate blood flow to the pelvic organs, and stretch the ankles, knee joints, and back.

From a kneeling position, sit your buttocks back onto your heels and lower your chest to the floor. Your arms rest on the floor alongside the body with the palms facing up. The head rests on the floor. As you hold this stretch, breathe into the stretch sinking into the forehead. Keep drawing into yourself. Hold this stretch for 1 minute. For an added stretch all along your spine and upper body, extend your arms overhead with the palms down.

## Bridge

The purpose of this stretch is to massage the abdominal muscles and organs and stimulate blood flow through the spine and into the coccyx. It keeps the spine supple, elastic, and revitalized. It keeps the pelvic organs healthy, and tones the legs and glutes. Do not use if this in pregnancy if it feels like it strains any part of your abdomen, but if you are very limber or have been doing it since before pregnancy you may be able to continue.

In a lying down position facing up, your knees are bent and the soles of the feet are on the floor hip-width apart. The arms are resting alongside of the body with the palms of the hands in a prone position. Lift the torso to the sky by first starting at the hips. Articulate the vertebrae one at a time as you lift the entire torso and hips towards the sky. Keep lifting your hips to the sky while you push your heels into the floor. Send your eye gaze to your navel. Hold this position for one minute. Continue to breathe deeply as you hold the bridge position.

## Spinal Twist

The purpose of this stretch is to release the lower back and stimulate blood flow to the internal organs and spine. Use gently and with care in pregnancy (do not twist your uterus, no forced movements).

Lie down on your back. Bring the left knee into the chest. The right leg is extended on the floor. Lower your left knee across the right leg. For an added stretch, place your right hand on your left knee, gently pressing it downward. Look over your left shoulder. Keep your shoulders in contact with the floor. Hold stretch for 1 minute.

Alternate **Standing Rotation** method: With your feet planted firmly about 18" apart (for stability) rotate your head and shoulders to the left as far as you can until you feel tension or some pain in a few muscles of your neck and/or back. Hold for a few seconds and slowly twist in the opposite direction and hold a few seconds. Do for at least 4 to 5 minutes a day.

If sedentary, do it at least twice a day. It is easier to do properly if you clasp your hands on top of your head. See how far you can aim your elbow behind your back and then twist the head more to see as far behind your back as you can, in each direction. This way you attain maximum rotation of both the neckbone and backbone. Repeat this for 5 minutes but start out doing less if you get worse back pain. Rotating is not much exercise, so you should not tire!

## Cobra

The purpose of this stretch is to open the chest, keep the back supple and healthy while regenerating the muscles of the torso and relieving lower back pain. Usually for early pregnancy only - be gentle.

In a prone (faced down) lying down position, place the elbows on the floor under the shoulders with the hands forward. Stretch and lift the chest to the sky while extending the elbows and straightening the arms. Keep your hips in contact with the floor. Keep lifting out of the lower back. Squeeze the shoulder blades together. Squeeze the glutes. Look between your eyebrows. Breathe deeply as you hold this stretch for one minute. Follow with squats!