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## Exercises for Back Pain Due to Degenerative Disk Disease (Osteoarthritis) and Facet Joint Impingement

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### Aerobic Exercise Recommendations

With a disc injury, the best modes of aerobic exercise are:

- brisk walking
- swimming (breast stroke or kicking while holding a flutter board)

These exercises are low-impact. To receive maximal health benefits, aerobic exercise should be done at a moderate intensity for 30 minutes, 5 days per week.

### Strengthening Exercise Recommendations

\* Note: If you experience any pain while performing these exercises, stop and move on to the next exercise.

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#### Exercise: McKenzie Lower Back Extension

##### Description:

- Lay face down on the floor, palms pressed into the ground in line with your shoulders and elbows on the ground.
- Keeping your core muscles tight, extend your head and shoulders off of the floor while using your hands and forearms. If more extension is available, continue pushing into your hands until your elbows are off of the floor and your arms are straight.
- At the top of your extension, hold for 5 seconds.
- Slowly return to starting position. Repeat 5-10 times.



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#### Exercise: Modified Plank

##### Description:

- Lie on your stomach. Push yourself up so that you are resting on your forearms and knees, keeping your elbows under your shoulders.
- Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.
- Work your way up to holding for 1 minute.



**Exercise: Plank****Description:**

- If you are able to hold the modified plank for 1 minute, try to perform the plank with your knees off of the ground, with your legs straight behind you.
- Note: It is important to make sure that your pelvis is not sticking up in the air or sinking towards the ground. Try to maintain a straight line from your shoulders to your feet

**Exercise: Bird-dog****Description:**

- Start on all fours. If you have sore knees, make sure to kneel on a mat or folded-up towel. Keep your spine in a neutral position (somebody should be able to balance a drink on your back) and look down at the floor to keep your neck long.
- Lift your right arm and left leg until they are parallel to the floor. Keep your abdominal muscles tight. Hold for 5 seconds.
- Return to the starting position and repeat on the other side. That is one repetition. Repeat 5-10 times.

**Exercise: Straight leg raise****Description:**

- Lie on your back with one leg bent and one leg straight.
- Keeping your lower back flat on the ground and keeping your abdominal muscles engaged by pressing your low back against the floor, raise your straight leg about 45 degrees of the floor with your foot flexed.
- Hold for 3 seconds and then slowly lower.
- Repeat 10 times before switching sides.

**Exercise: Clamshell****Description:**

- Start on your left side, knees bent at about a 45 degree angle with legs stacked on top of one another.



- Keeping your feet together, rotate your right knee towards the sky without rotating your pelvis. Keep your lower leg on the floor.
- Pause at the top of the motion before slowly returning to the start. Repeat 12-15 times before switching sides.



**Exercise: Mini Squats**

**Description:**

- Stand with feet hip-width apart, toes slightly pointed outwards, holding on to a chair for balance.
- Bend your knees slightly to sit back into your heels, as though sitting in a chair. Make sure that your knees are not falling inwards beyond your big toe and that your knees do not go in front of your toes. Keep your feet flat on the ground.
- Drive back up to standing position through your heels. Perform 2 sets of 12-15 repetitions.



**Exercise: Standing hamstring stretch**

**Description:**

- Place your right foot up on a stool or chair, placed beside an object/wall that you can hold on to for balance.
- Keeping your back straight, bend forwards from the hips towards your right foot, keeping your right leg straight.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds before switching sides.



**Exercise: Swiss ball abdominal stretch**

**Description:**

- Perform this stretch if you have access to a Swiss ball and if this motion is available to you.
- Start in a seated position on a ball. Slowly walk your feet away from the ball, until the ball rolls under your mid-low back.
- Let your neck and arms relax back over the ball. Hold for 30-60 seconds.



- To come out of the pose, slowly walk your feet back towards the ball, engaging your core muscles to return to a seated position. Have someone assist you if needed.
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**Exercise:** Lying on a foam roller

**Description:**

- If you have access to a foam roller, lay with it parallel to your spine. Put your arms in a T-shape. Hold for 30 seconds before raising your arms to rest above your head.



**Exercise:** Hip flexor stretch

**Description:**

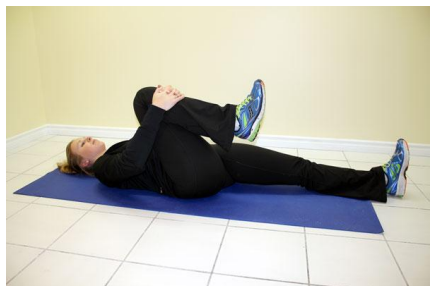
- Kneel on left knee, with right foot in front. If kneeling is uncomfortable for your knees, kneel on towel or mat.
- Ensure that your left foot is in line with the left knee.
- Lean forward into your right knee, while ensuring that your right knee does not go in front of your right ankle.
- Marginally draw your right hip back and your left hip forward to increase the stretch.
- Hold for 30-60 seconds before switching sides.



**Exercise:** One knee to chest

**Description:**

- Lie down on your back, pulling one knee into your chest by wrapping your hands around your shin or the back of your thigh (whichever is accessible).
- Keep your head and shoulders relaxed back on the floor.
- Try and keep the opposite leg straight on the ground with the foot flexed
- Hold for 30 seconds before switching sides.



**Exercise:** Both knees to chest

**Description:**

- Lie on your back, pulling both knees into chest with your hands around your shins or the back of your thighs.
- Keep your head and shoulders relaxed back on the



floor.

- You can gently rock back and forth or rock in little circular motions, massaging your lower back.

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### **Exercise: Cat/Cow**

#### **Description:**

- Start on all fours, with your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips, looking down to keep your neck long.
- As you exhale, draw your navel in towards your spine and arch your back up towards the ceiling, tucking your chin. Pause.
- As you inhale, reverse the motion to return to neutral position. If your body allows for it, lift your tailbone to the sky and lift your neck to look forwards.



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### **Exercise: Child's pose**

#### **Description:**

- Start from a kneeling position, with your big toes together and your knees wide apart
- Sink back to sit on your heels, with your arms extended in front of you
- With each deep breath, try to relax your hips back onto your heels (you can use your hands to help push you back)
- Hold for 30-60 seconds before rolling up slowly



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### **Exercise: Foam Rolling**

#### **Description:**

- If you have access to a foam roller, lie with it perpendicular under your shoulder blades, crossing your arms in front of your chest.
- Lift your hips off of the floor, using your legs and abdominal muscles, to roll the foam roller down to your mid-back and up again.
- Exhale as you roll down your spine
- Continue for 30-60 seconds.

