

Dr. Cluff's Back/Sciatica Exercise Regimen*

1. Bridges – lying on your back with your knees bent, push your pelvis into the air, hold for 5 seconds, and repeat 30 times.
2. Knee pushes – lie on your back, and one by one push your knee against your hand with your arm straight, hold for 5 seconds, and do 15 on each side (alternating, total 30).
3. Leg circles – lie on one side and with your legs straight, create circles with the top leg, 30 going one direction and then reversing and do 30 the other direction; then switch to the other side and do 30 both directions using the other leg.
4. Bicycle – lie on your back and pedal 30 rotations one direction, then backpedal 30 rotations.
5. Superman – get on your hands and knees, lift one arm straight out, and also lift the opposite leg straight out. Hold for 10 seconds, then switch to the other side. Do 15 repetitions on each side (total 30).
6. Toe taps – lie on your back and lift your feet off the ground with your hips and knees at right angles. Then, touch each toe to the floor, doing 30 reps on each side (total 60).
7. Piriformis stretches – lie on your back, with both knees bent. Cross the right leg over the left, with the outside right ankle touching just above the left knee. Grab the right knee with the left hand, and pull the right knee towards the left shoulder, giving a nice stretch to the right buttock area. Hold for 5 seconds, then raise the left leg off the floor, flexing the left hip just past a 90-degree angle, and hold for another 5 seconds. Repeat on the other side, and do 15 reps on each side.
8. Plank holds – lie on your stomach, then raise up to your elbows and tippie toes, keeping the rest of your body off the ground and your back and legs straight. Hold for 10 seconds, rest for 3 or 4 seconds, and repeat 30 times. This will be difficult at the beginning, and it is okay to do what are called modified plank holds, where you go up onto your knees instead of your toes, or you may alternate back and forth between regular and modified plank holds.
9. Obliques – lie on your back with your feet off the floor and your hips and knees at 90° angles, then place your hands behind your head and lift your shoulder blades off the floor. Push one elbow towards the opposite knee and hold for 5 seconds. Do 10-15 reps on each side.
10. Gluteus bridges – lie on your back with your feet propped up on the edge of a couch or bed, lift your rear end off the floor so that your body is straight, hold for 5 seconds, and repeat 30 times.
11. Nerve glides – lie on one side, with your hips and knees at 90-degree angles, with a thick pillow between your legs. Keeping the bottom leg bent, slowly bend and straighten the top leg to mobilize the sciatic nerve. Do 30 reps on each side.
12. Push-ups – do 30 or more pushups, but you may start with "girly" pushups, using your knees instead of going onto your toes.

*Takes about 45 minutes. Try to do a half or full session twice weekly, depending on your needs (your particular level of disease). The goal is to keep your symptoms at bay and allow you to be very functional both with daily and more active activities. Remember that everybody's back is different, and although these exercises should be safe for everyone because they were designed in neutral positions, if they are not working (or especially if your symptoms get worse despite treatment), you need to be reevaluated.