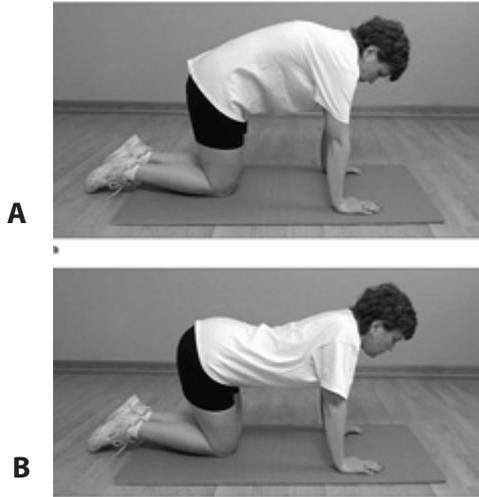




Core Strengthening Exercises

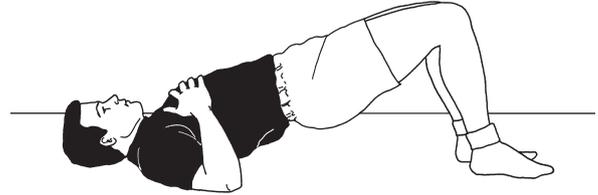
Cat/camel position



Cat/camel position

Start on hands and knees (crawl position). A) Carefully arch your back and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. B) Then gently sag your back and hold for 3 to 5 seconds. Repeat this 5 to 7 times.

The gluteal bridge



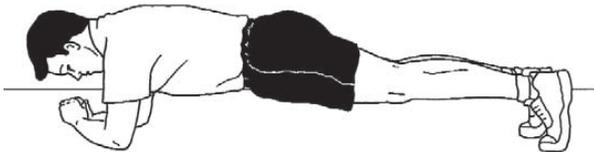
The gluteal bridge

Muscles targeted: gluteus maximus, erector spinae/multifidus.

Technique: Lie on the floor with your knees bent. Squeeze your gluteals and then push your hips up until there is a straight line through knee and hip to upper body. Shoulders remain on the floor. Beware of raising too high or of flaring the ribs, which pushes the back into hyperextension. Hold the position. Start with five sets of 10 secs progressing to two to three sets of 60 secs.

Progression: Extend one leg carefully ahead of you and hold the position without dropping or tilting the pelvis.

The plank



The plank

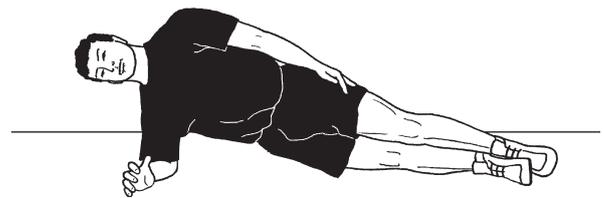
A common exercise that requires good abdominal strength and co-contraction of the abdominal wall musculature to hold the lumbar spine and pelvis in correct alignment.

Muscles targeted: Rectus abdominis, Abdominal wall (TA/internal obliques).

Technique: Hold a straight body position, supported on elbows and toes. Brace the abs, and set the low back in the neutral position once you are up. Sometimes this requires a pelvic tilt to find the right position. The aim is to hold this position, keeping the upper spine extended, for an increasing length of time up to a maximum of 60 secs. Perform two to three sets. Keep shoulders back and chest out, while maintaining the neutral lumbar position. This makes the exercise considerably more challenging.

Progression: Lift one leg just off the floor; hold the position without tilting at the pelvis.

The side plank



The side plank

A safe and effective exercise for the obliques and quadratus lumborum. Recent research also shows this to be an excellent exercise for the lower abdominal muscles.

Muscles targeted: Obliques (internal and external), Quadratus lumborum, Transversus abdominis.

Technique: Lie on one side, ensuring the top hip is 'stacked' above the bottom hip. Push up until there is a straight bodyline through feet, hips and head. Hold the position, increasing the length of hold up to a maximum of 60 secs. Perform two to three sets. Keep the elbow under the shoulder to avoid upper body strain. Lower under control and repeat on opposite side.

Progression: Raise the top leg in the air and hold it in the abducted position.