Unless your healthcare provider instructs you otherwise, begin your rehabilitation program with the exercises in this Phase 1 infosheet. For additional resources, including videos, to help you with your rehabilitation exercises, visit Rx3 for Low Back Pain online.

### Phase 1: Leg and Core Exercises

Perform 10 reps (repetitions) of each exercise in order (1–3), and then repeat the entire cycle for a total of 3 sets with minimal rest between exercises.

- 10 reps each
- 3 sets
- Cycle all exercises
- Minimal rest between exercises

1. **Lying Abs March**

   **Starting position:** Lie face up on the ground, knees bent, with a small towel rolled up under your low back.

   **How to perform:** Tighten your abs, pressing gently into the towel under you. Lift one foot slightly off the ground and hold for 5 sec. Keeping your abs tight, alternate sides in a marching fashion. One “rep” is both legs. Add time to each hold (up to 10 sec) to make the exercise more challenging.

2. **Side Lying Hip Abduction**

   **Starting position:** Lie on your side with your bottom knee bent, your top leg straight, and your top hip “rolled forward” to provide stability and balance.

   **How to perform:** In a slow, controlled manner, lift your top leg in the air, leading with your heel. Hold for 5 sec and then slowly lower your leg to its starting position. You can use an elastic band to increase the difficulty if your leg’s weight alone is not challenging enough.

3. **Glute Bridge with Hold**

   **Starting position:** Lie face up on the ground, knees bent about 60 degrees, with your feet hip-width apart and firmly planted on the floor.

   **How to perform:** Lift your hips off the floor, pushing through your heels and squeezing your glutes as you lift your hips. Hold for 5 sec. Do not overextend your back! You should feel the activity mostly in your legs. If you feel strain in your back, lower your hips a bit until you feel your legs and glutes take control, and hold there. Add time to each hold (up to 20 sec) to make the exercise more challenging.
**Phase 1: Cardio component**

Do some kind of low-impact cardio activity at least 3 days a week, and then 5 days a week as it becomes easier. As a general rule, don’t increase the volume or intensity of your cardio exercises more than 10% per week.

**Exercises:** Bike, walk, or swim

**How to perform:** The key is low-impact activity that doesn’t cause pain in your back.

At this initial stage, the intensity doesn’t need to be extreme, as long as you’re making progress.

**Duration:** 15–20 minutes

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**Phase 1: Stretches**

Perform in the order listed, holding each stretch for 30–60 seconds and taking a brief rest between reps.

- 2–3 reps (except Cat-Camel)
- 30–60 second hold each (except Cat-Camel)
- Rest 5–10 sec

1. **Self-Massage – Glute**

   **Starting position:** Sit upright on the floor with a tennis ball, foam roller, or similar object under your butt muscle on one side, with that leg extended straight.

   **How to perform:** Support your body weight with your arms and off leg, moving up, down, and around the glute muscle. Try to relax your body, especially the side you’re rolling. Give extra attention and time to areas in the muscles that feel sore. Repeat on the other side. To make the stretch more challenging, bend the extended leg and cross it over the opposite knee.

2. **Kneeling Quad-Hip Stretch**

   **Starting position:** Kneel on the ground with one knee resting on a towel or foam pad, and the other knee bent 90 degrees, foot in front of you.

   **How to perform:** Tighten your abs, squeeze your glutes, and press your hips and torso forward. You should feel the stretch in the front of your lower thigh. If you feel pain in your low back, shift your hips back, retighten your abs, and try the stretch again. Repeat on the other side; one rep is both sides. To make the stretch more challenging, place your back foot against a wall or chair.

3. **Lying Glute Stretch**

   **Starting position:** Lying face up on the ground with both knees bent, cross one leg over the other, resting the ankle on the opposite knee.

   **How to perform:** Keeping your back flat on the ground, grab the back of your thigh with your arms and pull it slowly towards your chest. You should feel a stretch in the glute of the top leg. Repeat on the other side; one rep is both sides.
Phase 1: Stretches (continued)

4. Lying Hamstring Stretch

**Starting position:** Lying face up on the ground, grab the back of your thigh or loop a towel around the foot of your injured leg. The other leg should be extended straight and resting on the floor.

**How to perform:** Keeping a slight bend in the knee, slowly lift your leg into the air using your arms or the towel for support. You should feel a stretch in the back of the thigh of your raised leg. Repeat on the other side; one rep is both sides.

5. Cat-Camel Stretch

**Starting position:** Crouch down on the floor on your hands and knees.

**How to perform:** Round your back up towards the sky and rotate your head down towards your chest. Hold for 3 sec. Slowly lower your midsection past the start position, curving your back, stomach towards the floor, and your head lifted to the sky. Hold for 3 sec and repeat for a total of 5–10 reps.

**Progression**

- Perform all the exercises outlined in Phase 1 for at least 3 weeks.
- Move on to Phase 2 when you can complete all the Phase 1 exercises for the maximum recommended sets and repetitions for at least 3 days a week.
- If you have pain with the Phase 1 exercises, or if you have questions about when you should progress to the next phase, consult your healthcare provider.