

Herniated Disk Rehabilitation Exercises

- **Side Plank:** Lie on your side with your legs, hips, and shoulders in a straight line. Prop yourself up onto your forearm so your elbow is directly under your shoulder. Lift your hips off the floor and balance on your forearm and the outside of your foot. Try to hold this position for 15 seconds, then slowly lower your hip to the ground. Switch sides and repeat. Work up to holding for 1 minute or longer. This exercise can be made easier by starting with your knees and hips flexed to 45 degree angles.
- **Gluteal stretch:** Lying on your back with both knees bent, rest the ankle of one leg over the knee of your other leg. Grasp the thigh of the bottom leg and pull that knee toward your chest. You will feel a stretch along the buttocks and possibly along the outside of your hip on the top leg. Hold this for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.
- **Quadruped arm/leg raise:** Get down on your hands and knees. Tighten your abdominal muscles to stiffen your spine. While keeping your abdominals tight, raise one arm and the opposite leg away from you. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Lower your arm and leg slowly and alternate sides. Do this 10 times on each side.
- **Extension exercise:** Lie face down on the floor for 5 minutes. If this hurts too much, lie face down with a pillow under your stomach. This should relieve your leg or back pain. When you can lie on your stomach for 5 minutes without a pillow, then you can continue with the rest of this exercise.

After lying on your stomach for 5 minutes, prop yourself up on your elbows for another 5 minutes. Lie flat again for 1 minute, then press down on your hands and extend your elbows while keeping your hips flat on the floor. Hold for 1 second and lower yourself to the floor. Repeat 10 times. Do 4 sets. Rest for 2 minutes between sets. You should have no pain in your legs when you do this, but it is normal to feel pain in your lower back. Do this several times a day.

- **Dead bug exercise:** Lie on your back with your knees bent, arms at your sides, and feet flat on the floor. Tighten your abdominal muscles and push your lower back into the floor. While keeping your abdominals tight, lift up one leg several inches off the floor, hold for 5 seconds, then lower it. Repeat this exercise with the opposite leg. Then lift your arm over your head, hold for 5 seconds, then lower it. Repeat with the opposite arm. Do 5 repetitions with each leg and arm. Once this exercise becomes easy, raise one leg and the opposite arm together. Hold for 5 seconds. Lower your arm and leg and raise the opposite arm and leg up and hold for 5 seconds. Do 3 sets of 5.

Do the following, partial curl exercise only when you no longer have pain in your buttocks or legs.

- **Partial curl:** Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Tighten your stomach muscles. Tuck your chin to your chest. With your hands stretched out in front of you, curl your upper body forward until your shoulders clear the floor. Hold this position for 3 seconds. Don't hold your breath. It helps to breathe out as you lift your shoulders up. Relax. Repeat 10 times. Build to 3 sets of 10. To challenge yourself, clasp your hands behind your head and keep your elbows out to the side.

If you have a herniated disk, you should limit driving and other sitting activities to no more than 30 minutes at a time. Walking is also good exercise for you.

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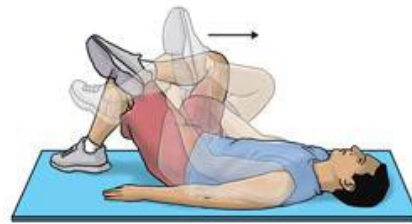
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