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Low Back Movements

Learning to listen to your body. Try these 3 movements to learn how your body moves.

The movements should be painless. If they cause pain, try making the movement smaller. If decreasing the range of motion doesn't stop the pain, skip that movement. The movements are meant to focus on quality of motion and isolation, not on how big or strong the movement can be.

Quality over quantity.

Use the movements to **build trust with your body**; trust that what you ask it to do will be safe and pain free. These movements will activate muscles that may have become weak, particularly the deep gluteal muscles. **Activating these muscles in a safe environment may reduce and even prevent back pain.**

The first movement (wipers) can be used before and after the heel reach and glute squeezes, to explore their effect on range and quality of motion. The wipers can reduce unwanted strain.

Wipers

- Lie on your back with legs out straight if that's comfortable. If not, place a pillow under knees.
- Separate your legs slightly wider than hips width.
- The movement happens from your femurs (thigh bones) and the rest of the leg follows.
- Internally rotate your legs towards midline. (Toes will point in.)
- Then reverse directions and externally rotate. (Toes point out.)
- Gently alternate rotation of femurs internally and externally, like windshield wipers. Try to make the movement smooth as possible without any pain.
- Slow and smooth is better than fast and big. We are learning to listen so take your time!
- When you get the movement down notice your low back. Is it trying to help?
- If it is, make the movement smaller until you isolate the femurs without involving the low back.
- Quality of movement is more important than quantity!



Heel Reach

- Lie on your back, same as for wipers. (See modification below*)
- Reach one heel away from your pelvis, lengthening the hip, as if you were trying to press the sole of your foot to a wall.
- At the same time, bring the other heel toward the head, compressing your hip socket.
- Alternate sides, making the movement smooth.
- This movement is going to seem very small; less is more! Try using only 75% max effort.
- Notice the difference in quality of motion between the sides.
- One hip may compress easily and may reach away more easily.

- Notice again: is the low back doing the work of the hips?
- If you are hiking your hip or involving your lumbar spine the movement is too big.
- It may be helpful to place your hands on the front of your hips just below the “hip bones”. There will be small movement at the site of your hands. If the movement involves a tilting of your pelvis, or your lumbar muscles (QL) engage, make the movement smaller.
- *Modification, if needed for comfort: You can do this movement with knees bent and feet on the floor. Reach the knee long instead of the heel.



Repeat Wipers for a few cycles & notice differences.

Glute Squeezes

- Lie on your back: same as for wipers.
- Place your hands on front of hips at level of ASIS or "hip bones".
- Squeeze gluteal muscles (Max, Med, Min) at about 70-85% max effort.
- Slowly release glutes as evenly and smoothly as possible.
- Notice: does your pelvis tilt towards your feet or towards head?
- This will tell you if you are targeting only some of the glutes. If the answer is yes, try activating all the gluteal muscles or try a smaller movement.
- Do a few squeezes with both right and left.
- Then squeeze the right side and hold it, squeeze and release the left before releasing the right.
- Alternate back and forth for a few each side.
- The order is not as important; what is important is that your brain is asking to isolate and your glutes are responding.
- After alternating, return to squeezing both right and left sides at the same time.
- You should notice a more coordinated, stronger, and smoother engagement and release.



Repeat Wipers for a few cycles & notice differences.

Enjoy listening to your body movements!

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This handout is intended to be a supplement for the In-Touch Series from [IAHE](#).

Please note: Movements listed should be performed under the guidance of a qualified professional. Statements made are not meant to replace or negate medical advice, and no one should use it that way. We encourage you to consult your health professionals to make decisions on your health.

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