

Horizon Spine & Pain of Utah

24-Week Low Back Pain Advanced Exercise Plan

Why This Plan Works

This 24-week program helps you regain strength, mobility, and confidence while preventing future back pain episodes. It includes aerobic exercise, core strengthening, and stretching, gradually building intensity. Research shows movement, not rest, is the key to recovery.

Safety First

- Stop and call us if you experience:
 - Sudden severe pain
 - Loss of bowel or bladder control
 - New numbness or weakness in your legs
 - Fever or unexplained weight loss

Mild soreness is normal. If pain is above 4/10 or lasts more than 24 hours, reduce activity by 25–50% and progress slower.

General Weekly Targets

- Aerobic activity: 4–5x/week, building to 40 min sessions
- Core & strength: 3x/week (15–30 min)
- Mobility & stretching: Daily, 10–15 min
- Mild soreness ($\leq 3/10$) is okay; reduce if pain $>4/10$ or lingers >24 hrs

Phase 1: Weeks 1–4 — Reset & Foundation

Aerobic: Walk 15–20 min 4x/week. Option: recumbent bike or pool walking.

Core/Strength (3x/week):

- Diaphragmatic breathing – 3x5 breaths
- Pelvic tilt – 2x10
- Bird-dog – 2x8/side
- Glute bridge – 2x10
- Side-lying clamshell – 2x10/side
- Modified front plank (knees) – 3x15 sec
- Sit-to-stand – 2x10
- Supported mini-squat – 2x10

Mobility: Cat-cow, hamstring stretch, hip flexor stretch, thoracic open-book

Phase 2: Weeks 5–8 — Build Capacity

Aerobic: Walk 25–30 min 5x/week. Add 1–2 min brisk intervals, 3–4 rounds.

Core/Strength (3x/week):

- Front plank – 3x20 sec
- Side plank – 2x15 sec/side
- Bird-dog with arm reach – 2x8/side
- Glute bridge (progress to single leg) – 3x10

- Pallof press (band) – 3x8/side
- Sit-to-stand with weight – 2x12
- Step-ups – 2x8/side
- Wall push-up – 2x10

Mobility: Add 90/90 hip rotations and ankle drills

Phase 3: Weeks 9–12 — Strength & Control

Aerobic: Walk 30–40 min, 5x/week. Include 2 interval sessions with brisk and recovery pace.

Core/Strength (3x/week):

- Front plank – 3x30 sec
- Side plank – 2x20 sec/side
- Bird-dog with band – 3x8/side
- Single-leg glute bridge – 3x10/side
- Split squat (supported) – 2x8/side
- Step-ups higher step – 3x10/side
- Hip hinge with light weight – 3x8
- Farmer's carry – 3x30 sec
- Wall or incline push-up – 3x10

Mobility: Add foam roller thoracic extensions

Phase 4: Weeks 13–24 — Resilience & Prevention

Aerobic: Goal 150–300 min/week. Mix walking, biking, swimming, hiking. Include one long session weekly.

Core/Strength (3x/week):

- Front plank – 3x45 sec
- Side plank – 3x25 sec/side
- Bird-dog with long lever – 3x8/side
- Glute bridge with band – 3x12
- Split squat – 3x8/side
- Hip hinge moderate weight – 3x8
- Farmer's or suitcase carry – 3x40 sec
- Anti-rotation band press – 3x8/side
- Step-up to balance – 3x8/side

Mobility: Full-body flow 10–15 min daily

Tips for Success

- Set a consistent schedule
- Track progress with a notebook or app
- Even small steps count — consistency matters
- Walking with a friend helps accountability