

## YOUR GAMEPLAN TO LIVE

### 5 Yoga Poses to Help Ease Lower Back Pain

#### Forward Fold

From a standing position feet hips-width apart, hinge at your hips and fold your body forward, reaching your fingers to the ground. Keeping your legs straight is not necessary, so bend your knees until you feel comfortable. As the tension subsides, work on straightening the legs to deepen the stretch in the backs of the legs, especially the hamstrings.

Tight hamstrings are a direct cause of tight lower back muscles and lower back tension. The Forward Fold is excellent in loosening the hamstrings and the entire backside of the legs.



#### Downward Dog

Come onto the floor on your hands and knees. Hands shoulder distance apart, feet hip distance apart. Place hands forward of your shoulders and activate your arms. Lift hips and tailbone towards the ceiling, engaging lower belly by drawing the navel in towards the spine. Neck and head continue along the same line as the spine. Firm shoulder blades. Bend knees a little (or a lot).



Downward dog can help soothe back pain by lengthening and strengthening the entire back and loosening hamstrings. It also temporarily takes weight off the hips and lower back, which feels great.

#### Cobra

Lie face down, stretch your legs back, tops of the feet on the floor. Hands on the floor under your shoulders. Hug the elbows back into your body. Press the tops of the feet and thighs firmly into the floor. Activate and straighten the arms to lift the chest off the floor. Distribute the backbend evenly throughout the entire spine.



Cobra Pose is best known for its ability to increase the flexibility of the spine. It stretches the chest while strengthening the spine and shoulders. It's an energizing



### 5 Ingredient Pumpkin Energy Balls

Makes 12

#### Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/2 cup pumpkin puree
- 1 1/4 cups old-fashioned oats
- 1/2 cup ground flax seeds
- 3 tablespoons honey

#### Directions:

Put the ingredients in a medium bowl and stir to combine. Cover the bowl and place it in the fridge to chill for 2 hours. This will make them easier to roll. Line a plate or baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll the mixture into about 12-14 balls and place them on the parchment paper. Chill again for 2 more hours to help solidify.

Source: Recipe and photo by Babble  
<https://www.babble.com/best-recipes/pumpkin-energy-balls/?cmp=smc%7C598910342>

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backbend, reducing stress and fatigue. It helps to ease the pain of sciatica.

## 2-Knee Twist

Lying on your back, bend your knees into your chest and bring your arms out to form a T. Lower your knees to ground on the right. Keep both shoulders pressed down firmly. If the left shoulder lifts, lower your knees further away from the right arm. *Switch sides.*



This pose is great for stretching out all of the muscles that run along your spine. Dropping your knees to the side and actively pressing the opposing shoulder to the mat releases the muscles all the way up your spine and especially creates space in the lower back.

## Reverse Pigeon or Eye of the Needle

Lying on your back, bend your knees and cross your right ankle on the left thigh. Lengthen your tailbone down toward the ground and find the action of pressing your right knee away from your body. Thread your right arm through the space created between the legs, and interlace your fingers around the back of the left thigh. Gently pull your left leg slightly closer to your chest while keeping your hips square. Keep the back of the head down and the backs of the shoulders relaxed down on the mat. *Switch sides.*



Because your lower back is connected to your hips and the muscles around it, tight hips could cause lower back pain. This pose opens the hips as well as the lower back and glute muscles.

**NOTE:** If you're dealing with a serious back injury, visit a specialist who can inform you on how you might be able to best heal the injury. However, if your sore lower back is simply stiff, rigid and compressed due to daily habits, these poses might help create a sense of spaciousness in an otherwise tight area.

## 4 Easy Foods to Make at Home When You Really Just Don't Feel Like Cooking

It's smart to have a stash of trusty eats for days when dinner must be quick...eggs, frozen veggies, brown rice, Ezekiel or other whole-grain bread and of course, avocado.

**Egg Scrambles** - What's an easier dinner than scrambled eggs? Mix it with sautéed greens (kale, spinach, or whatever you have on hand and any veggies you may have in the fridge.) Eat it as is, make a piece of toast, or put it in a wrap!

**Avocado Toast** - Everyone loves avocado toast, and for good reason. You can top it any way you want, it's filling, and it feels like you're indulging. What's easier than



## Slow Cooker Sweet Potato Lentil Stew

Serves 6

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 lbs. sweet potatoes (about 2 medium), peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 1/2 cups dried lentils, rinsed
- 3 medium carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 cup vegetables you have on hand such as zucchini, spinach, kale, corn, etc. (\*optional)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 carton (32 ounces) organic vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup minced fresh cilantro or parsley if you do not like cilantro

### Directions:

In a 3-qt. slow cooker, combine the first 10 ingredients. Cook, covered, on low 5-6 hours or until vegetables and lentils are tender. Stir in cilantro or parsley.

### Nutritional Facts

1 1/2 cups: 290 calories, 1g fat, 662mg sodium, 58g carbs (16g sugars, 15g fiber), 15g protein.

Source: Adapted from a Taste of Home recipe. Sweet Potato Lentil Stew Recipe photo by Taste of Home. <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/sweet-potato-lentil-stew>

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toasting some bread? Mash up an avocado and put it on top of the toast. Eat it just like that or top it with whatever you'd like – tomatoes and onions, sprouts, arugula, or cucumber. Not filling enough? Top with a fried egg or sliced hardboiled egg, and/or smoked salmon.

**Quick Stir-fry** - Mix leftover veggies or a bag of frozen veggies with brown rice or quinoa and a bit of soy sauce.

**Black Beans with Brown Rice** - Rinse a can of black beans and then simmer in a fry pan for a few minutes with onions, garlic and cilantro *or* your favorite herbs and spices. Serve over a bed of brown rice and top with salsa. Viola!

## Are Moods Contagious?

Have you ever heard the saying that smiles are contagious? A lot of scientific research says they actually are. And so are frowns. And yawns. In addition to behaviors, science also says that attitudes and beliefs are “contagious” – or can spread through populations.

In a study of junior high and high school students, researchers found that students with friends suffering from bad moods were more likely to report bad moods themselves, while the opposite also held true — students with happier friends were happier themselves. Various components of mood, including appetite, tiredness and sleep were assessed. But what is important to note is that the contagious effect was not strong enough in the negative direction to increase the risk of a *major* depressive incident (clinical depression). It did increase the risk of certain depressive symptoms, though, called “subthreshold depression.” This is when a person suffers from *discontent* and other depressive symptoms, but at a level that's under what's typically diagnosed as clinical depression.

On the brighter side – another study in 2008, found that a friend living within a mile of a happy friend has a 25% greater chance of becoming happy over the 20-year study period. The neighbor of a happy person increases their likelihood of happiness by an impressive 34%, even more than the spouse of a happy person (who is only 8% more likely to be happy).

Equally impressive, however, was the finding that happiness can spread through social networks (and we're not talking about social media – REAL LIFE social networks) by up to three degrees (meaning friends of friends of friends) can all benefit from one person's glowing disposition.

According to the researchers:

*“People who are surrounded by many happy people and those who are central in the network are more likely to become happy in the future. Longitudinal statistical models suggest that clusters of happiness result from the spread of happiness and not just a tendency for people to associate with similar individuals...”*

**Source: Dr. Joseph Mercola**

<https://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2017/10/12/moods-are-contagious.aspx>



## Balsamic Glazed Salmon

Serves 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. Brussels sprouts, halved
- 1/4 c. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 c. balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 c. dry white wine
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. fresh rosemary, stripped and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 4, 4-oz. salmon filets

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Add brussels sprouts to a large, rimmed baking sheet, drizzle with half the olive oil and season all over with salt and pepper. Bake for 20 minutes while you make glaze.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine balsamic, wine, brown sugar, lemon, rosemary and garlic. Bring to a boil, then simmer until thick and shiny, 10-12 minutes.

Remove pan from the oven, place salmon filets skin-side down among brussels sprouts, brush with remaining olive oil, season with more salt and pepper, and spoon with glaze. Bake until salmon is cooked through and brussels sprouts are crispy, 12-15 minutes.

Source: Recipe and photo by Delish  
<http://www.delish.com/cooking/recipe-ideas/recipes/a55834/balsamic-glazed-salmon-recipe/>

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## Ghee - What is it and what are the benefits?

It's a staple in traditional Indian cooking and has become important in Paleo diets. People are even adding it to their morning coffee. So what exactly is ghee – and how is it any different than butter?

Simply put, ghee is a type of clarified butter that originated in India. Clarified butter is unsalted butter that is heated gently, causing the milk solids to separate from the golden liquid and drift to the bottom of the pan after the butter has melted. Any foam that is present is skimmed off of the surface, leaving just the liquid. The result is the delicious browned, nutty, caramel-like taste and aroma ghee is known for. Ghee has a longer shelf life than butter and higher smoke point (375 degrees), making it ideal for sautéing, searing, and other high temperature cooking. You can easily make ghee at home, using just unsalted butter and a heavy saucepan. It can be refrigerated for 6 months or frozen for a year.

Ghee is more tolerable for those who have lactose sensitivities, because the milk solids have been removed. Although it does still originate from dairy, so those with more serious dairy allergies should steer clear.

If you want the benefits, buy grass-fed ghee, or make your own with grass-fed butter. The ghee's nutrition is dependent on the milk that was used to originally make the butter. Ghee contains medium chain fatty acids, which are easy to digest and better for your heart in comparison to other saturated fatty acids.



## Feel-Good Turmeric Latte

Serves 1-2

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. turmeric
- 1/8 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. coconut oil
- 1 tsp.—1 Tbsp. sweetener of choice (I really like honey)
- Optional: 1-2 oz. hot espresso or strong hot tea
- A French Press

### Directions:

Add almond milk, cinnamon, turmeric, ginger and coconut oil to a small pot. Heat over medium-high, whisking frequently, until it boils. Add sweetener, whisk to combine, and remove from heat. Pour into a French press. Insert the press and quickly push it down, then pull it up continuously for 15-25 seconds, or until the latte is frothed to your liking. I like a lot of froth, so I do this for the full 25 seconds. Add optional espresso or tea to the bottom of a large mug, and then pour frothed milk into the mug. Don't lift the press while you're pouring—it'll strain out the grainy spices. Enjoy immediately.

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Source: Recipe and photo by fooduzzi  
<https://www.fooduzzi.com/2016/10/feel-good-turmeric-latte/>