

## DONKEY KICK (BENT LEG)

### Teaching points

This exercise can be surprisingly difficult for a patient to perform without inappropriately relying on the erector spinae to contribute to the movement.

Signs of this occurring include:

- Excessive lumbar lordosis
- Observation of excessive erector spinae activity
- Patient reports 'lower back muscles working'
- Patient cannot 'feel the buttock muscles working'

Poor technique: excessive lumbar lordosis



Poor technique: excessive erector spinae activity



Correct technique: relaxed erector spinae



To address poor technique you may wish to use the following techniques:

- Place your hands on the erector spinae and ask the patient to 'relax the muscles under your hands'
- Ask the patient to contract the gluteal muscles while lifting the leg<sup>101</sup>
- Prescribe the exercises with a smaller range of motion – stopping the leg movement at the point in which the patient starts to use their erector spinae
- Allow the patient to use a reduced lumbar lordosis initially (this is not ideal technique; however, some patients find it beneficial to identify their gluteus maximus. Once this has been achieved they can return to using a natural lumbar lordosis)

Modification: small leg movement



Modification: reduced lumbar lordosis



Prescribing exercises on all fours (refer to beginner and intermediate exercises for the lower back) prior to this exercise may also assist in patient awareness of their spine.

You can add an ankle weight to increase the challenge of this exercise. It can also be performed in the all-fours position for those who find it difficult to rest on their elbows.