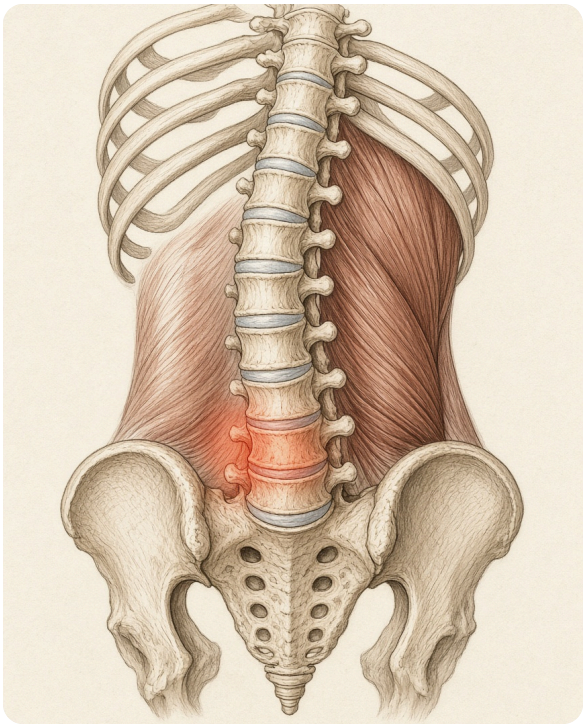
ARMIN PHYSIO



PATIENT GUIDE

Lateral Shift

Leaning to one side with severe back pain? It could be a **lateral shift.**

Armin Ghayyur
Physiotherapist · arminphysio.com

What is a lateral shift?

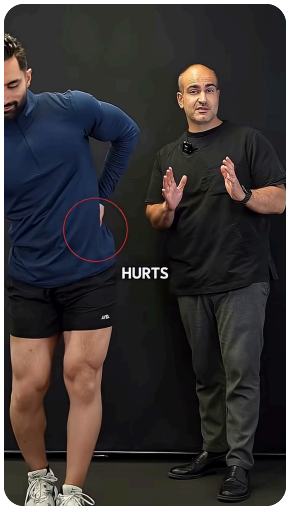
A lateral shift is a protective posture where your upper body shifts to one side, often because of a lumbar disc injury or an irritated spinal nerve. It looks unusual, but your body is leaning to take pressure off the irritated tissues. Many lateral shifts improve with the right assessment and exercises.

QUICK CHECK

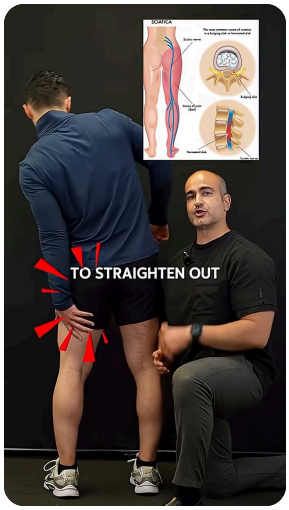
Does this sound like you?

- [ ] You **can't walk straight** because your back hurts
- [ ] A **shooting pain down the back of your leg** when you try to straighten out
- [ ] Your **hips don't "sit right"**: leaning or shifted to one side
- [ ] **Muscle spasms**, or your back feels "locked up"
- [ ] Pain with **bending, sitting or walking**

If you ticked a few boxes, you may have a lateral shift. It's often disc-related, so get assessed. Try the 4 exercises on the next pages.



Can't walk straight



Shooting pain when you straighten out

YOUR 4 EXERCISES

Try these exercises

1 Wall pillow shift correction

Gently guides the hips back under the spine



1. **Place a pillow against the wall** like so and have your **unaffected side leaning into it**.
2. With the affected side, **push right in** (hand on your hip), trying to straighten out your back.
3. **Go to the point where you just feel the pain** and come right back.
4. Repeat, gliding in and out.

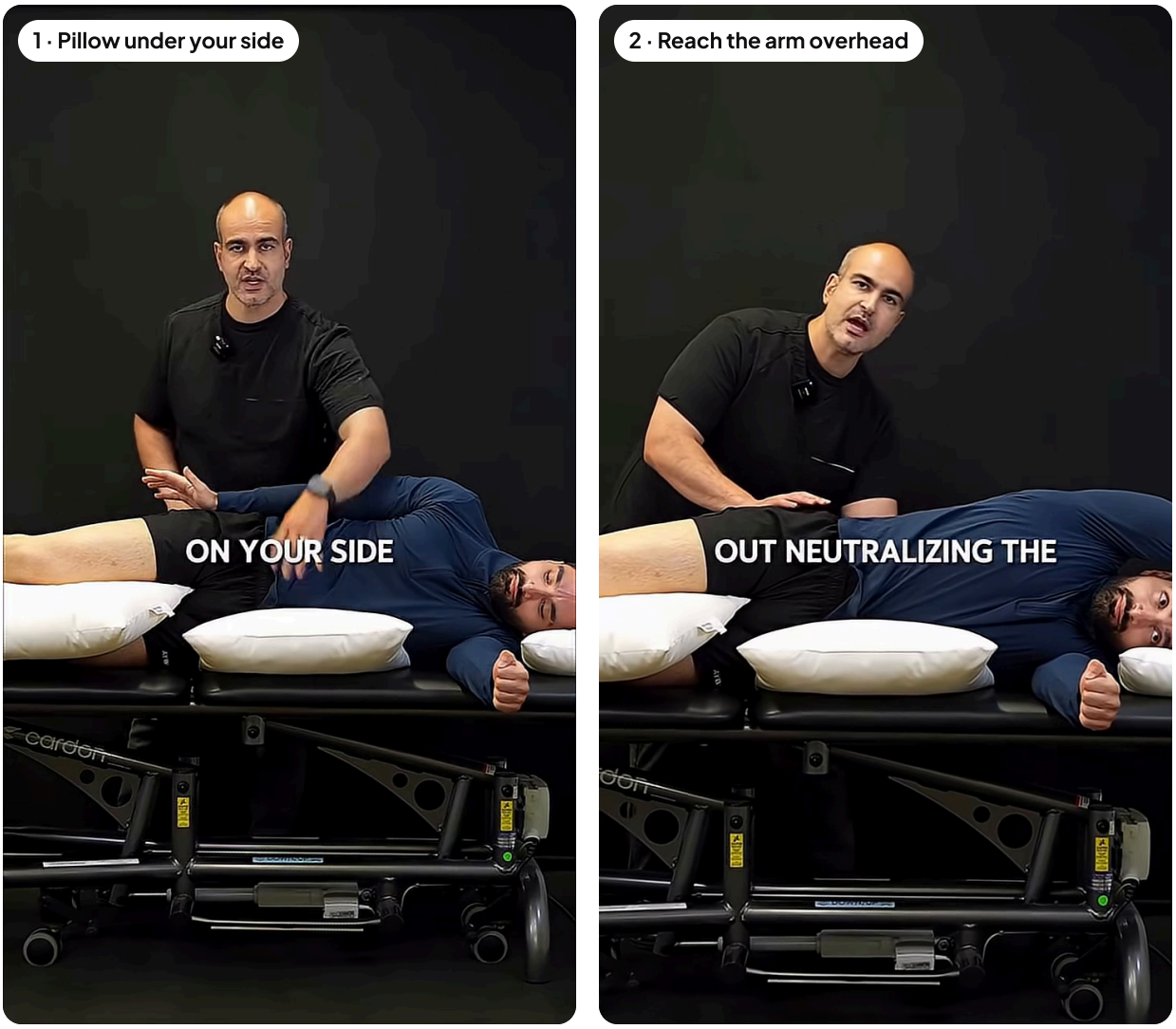
3 sets of 10–15 reps, hold **3–5 s** where appropriate

From Armin's video description

Stop if pain, numbness or tingling travels **farther down your leg**, or pain goes above about 4/10 or keeps building.

2 Side-lying pillow stretch

Stretches the side of the trunk and neutralizes the spine



1. **Lie on the affected side** like so, with a **pillow under your side**.
2. From here, **bring your hand up** overhead like so, stretching this part out and neutralizing the spine.
3. **Bring the arm back** and repeat.

3 sets of 10–15 reps, hold **3–5 s** where appropriate

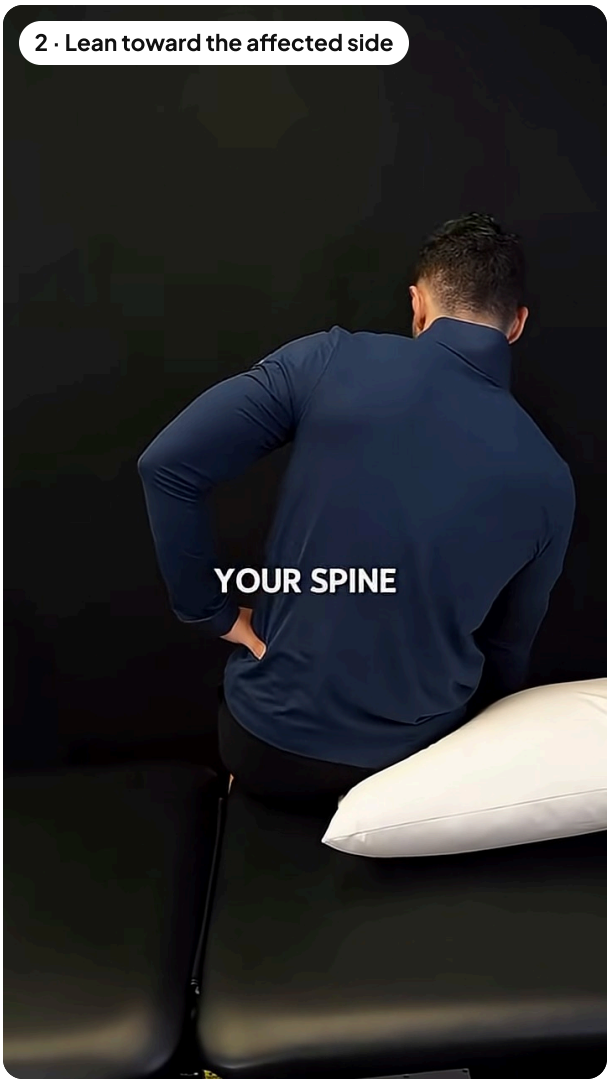
From Armin's video description

Stop if pain, numbness or tingling travels **farther down your leg**, or pain goes above about 4/10 or keeps building.

3 Seated pillow lean

Makes side-bending toward the affected side easier





1. **Place your unaffected side on a pillow** like this (sitting).
2. From here, **lean over towards the affected side**. The pillow helps neutralize your spine, making the movement a lot easier.
3. **Hold it for three seconds**, come right back and repeat.

3 sets of 10–15 reps, hold **3–5 s** where appropriate

From Armin's video description

Stop if pain, numbness or tingling travels **farther down your leg**, or pain goes above about 4/10 or keeps building.

4 Wall elbow lean

Lets gravity bring the hip back in and regains extension



1. **Lean against the wall** like so **on your elbow** (side to the wall).
2. **Let gravity bring that hip in** toward the wall.
3. Try to **create some extension**, regaining that extension back.
4. Come back out and repeat.

3 sets of 10, 3–5 s holds

Suggested dosing

From Armin's earlier lateral shift video ("Experiencing back pain and your hips don't sit right").

Stop if pain, numbness or tingling travels **farther down your leg**, or pain goes above about 4/10 or keeps building.

DAILY ROUTINE · ABOUT 10–15 MINUTES

Put it together

01
Correct
Wall pillow shift correction

02
Stretch
Side-lying pillow stretch

03
Side bend
Seated pillow lean, 3 s holds

04
Extend
Wall elbow lean

3 sets of 10–15 with 3–5 s holds for exercises 1–3 are from Armin's video description; the dosing for exercise 4 and doing it once or twice a day are suggestions. Suggested: mild discomfort up to about **4/10** is OK. Don't push through significant pain.

Stop the exercise if you notice

- Pain, numbness or tingling travelling **farther down your leg**
- Sharp pain, or pain above about 4/10 that keeps building
- Pain that lingers or is worse the next day

Only continue if your symptoms improve or begin to move **out of your leg and toward your back** (from Armin's description). Doing the wrong exercises too early can make things worse, so get assessed if you're unsure.

SAFETY FIRST

Get checked right away if you have

- **Numbness in the groin or saddle area**, or new **bladder or bowel** changes (trouble peeing, or losing control)
- Leg **weakness that is getting worse quickly**, foot drop, or symptoms in **both legs**
- Back pain after a **fall, accident or heavy impact**
- Back pain with **fever**, feeling unwell, or **unexplained weight loss**
- **Constant pain at night** that doesn't ease with rest or changing position
- A history of **cancer**, osteoporosis or long-term steroid use with new back pain

For numbness in the groin or saddle area, new bladder or bowel changes, or quickly worsening leg weakness, **go to the nearest emergency department right away**. For the others, see a doctor promptly. If your back isn't improving after a few weeks, **book an assessment**.

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NEED MORE HELP?

Book an assessment with Armin

In clinic or virtually. See current options and times at the link.

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WEBSITE
arminphysio.com

INSTAGRAM
@arminphysio

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@armin.phys1o

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Disclaimer: This handout is for education only. It is not a diagnosis or medical advice and does not replace an assessment by a qualified health professional. If you're unsure whether these exercises are right for you, check with your physiotherapist or doctor first.

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