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Stabilizing the Core to Eliminate Low-Back Pain

By Rich Lauro

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This is the first article of a series of articles to follow. In this article I will be addressing one of the main core stabilizing muscles of the lumbar spine and its role in back pain, as well as specific exercises that should be performed to prevent and recover faster from your back pain. You should make these exercises part of your everyday routine, just like brushing your teeth.

Words of wisdom before performing these exercises:

Consult with your doctor before starting an exercise program or if you're experiencing radiating pain.

Don't stop your exercise program just because your back feels better. Continue exercising to keep your back pain from returning.

Where most rehabilitation programs fail is in the selection and repetitions they prescribe to their patients. People with weak back muscles should not only strengthen these muscles but should concentrate on building muscle endurance since these muscles are at work all day long.

Consider working with a Muscle Activation Technique Therapist to identify and correct muscular imbalances and to make sure all muscles are functioning properly.

Core Stabilizer:

Transverse Abdominal (TVA) is a very important stabilizer of the low-back. It is the deepest of the abdominal muscles and the only one that runs horizontal. It activates prior to the muscles of the hips and thorax. When contracted it flattens the abdominal wall and compresses the viscera. The TVA is required for all integrated movements. If the TVA is weak it will allow bulging of the anterior abdominal wall increasing lordosis in the low-back and will also create a lateral bulge in (forward bending) or extension (back bending).

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Researchers used EMG activity to identify the timing of the TVA and the multifidus contraction, compared to other abdominal muscles, during movement of the upper limbs in response to visual stimuli. They found that, in subjects without lower back pain, the first active muscle was the transverse abdominis contracting prior to the upper limb. The model they developed "identified a consistent dysfunction of transverse abdominis in people with low-back pain.

Isometric Exercises Explained:

Before we get into the specific exercises for the TVA I would like to explain why isometric exercises are so important.

In order to activate the TVA muscle fibers or any other muscle for that matter, a weak muscle must first be "jump started" using MAT Therapy or by using isometric exercises before you can strengthen it

through exercise. If a weak muscle is not first jump started, then the body is forced to compensate and use other muscles to perform the desired movement.

Isometric exercises solve several problems that Rehab programs and weight lifting activities do not solve:

Problem #1: A weak muscle will not contract with most strengthening exercises because dominant muscles will compensate for weak muscles.

Problem #2: When the body senses instability in the joint, it will tighten up to protect the joint. Stretching a tight muscle will only create a temporary release and could result in a more vulnerable joint.

Problem #3: Muscle imbalances may occur through repetitive use of the same muscle, or through injury, causing the body to go into "protective" mode.

When performing isometric exercise contractions, the contraction should be held for 6 seconds and repeated 6 times. This allows time for peak tension to develop and metabolic changes to occur in the muscle. The muscle should be placed in its shorthend position. In this position the muscle is at its weakest. The intensity of each isometric contraction should increase. By the 6th contraction, greater range of motion and neural input should occur. For more information on isometric exercises visit

Exercises for the TVA

This exercise is critical in re-establishing good communication between the brain and the key stabilizer muscles (TVA). Progressing to advanced abdominal exercises when your body is not prepared will only magnify muscular imbalances that can cause injury and pain.

Lie on your back and cross your left leg over right leg. Your left heel should be next to the right knee.

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Rotate right approx 30 degrees your left hip will come off the ground several inches. Push knee into the ball or wall 6 times for 6 seconds. Start lightly and increase pressure each time. If you feel cramping in the inner thigh you are pressing too hard. This exercise will activate the TVA and should be followed up by regular abdominal exercises.

Rich Lauro

To learn more about MAT Techniques and how to prevent and recover faster from your sports injury Visit

or call 540-840-3208 to get your FREE REPORT "The Secret To

Eliminating Muscle and Joint Pain".

Addressing The Cause And Finding A Cure: Why Cause is Everything When It Comes To Low

Back Pain

By Steve Preston

There is an epidemic, at least in the States when it comes to treating back pain. Most doctors do just that... treat back pain rather than finding and eliminating the cause.

You can treat your symptoms for an eternity, and you may feel better for a short period of time. To truly get at the heart of the matter though, you have to find and eliminate the cause of low back pain.

I'll let you in on a little secret. Most chronic low back pain can be resolved in six weeks or less. It's true!

A majority of chronic low back pain is caused by simple factors including: Poor Posture Injury Muscle Imbalances Improper Lifting Extra Weight

Let's take a look at each of these more closely.

Poor Posture

Posture is everything when it comes to back pain. Good posture results in stability and strength. Bad posture results in back pain. Many people can alleviate chronic back pain simply by taking the time to improve their posture. You probably can too!

Injury

We are all subject to injury at one time or another. You can work toward preventing injury in certain circumstances however. A lot of the injuries that result in low back pain are caused by improper lifting techniques. You may be lifting a heavy box, or you may be lifting a heavy weight without warming up adequately. Either way, if you injure yourself you are subject to back pain. What can you do to improve

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your chances for recovery? One of the best things you can do is exercise. You should incorporate stretching activities into your daily regimen. By doing so you will condition your back and are less likely to get injured, and more likely to recover faster when you do get injured.

Muscle Imbalances

Muscle Imbalances occur when two muscles that oppose each other are unequally matched. If you exercise your back regularly for example, but never exercise your stomach, your body will be in a state of imbalance. No matter how strong your back is in this situation, you are going to be subject to back pain. Eliminate the muscle imbalances through rehabilitation and proper exercise and you stand a good chance of eliminating back pain.

Improper Lifting

OK, go back and re-read the section on injury. You need to lift correctly in order to avoid injury. NEVER bend from the waist when picking something up off of the floor, even if it is a feather. Always bend from the knees, and use your leg and abdominal muscles to support you when lifting an object. Many improper lifting injuries actually occur in the gym. This happens when a person attempts to lift a weight that is too heavy or fails to warm up properly. You can avoid these injuries by paying close attention to technique at all times.

Extra Weight

Carrying around a few extra pounds may not seem like a big deal, but when it comes to back pain it could mean the difference between no back pain and chronic back pain. Even if you are carrying around just ten extra pounds, your body will have to shift and redistribute itself to accommodate the extra weight. Consider losing the extra weight, and you may realize your back pain soon follows.

Steve Preston, President of Fast Fitness has been training and counseling clients for 15 years. He offers personal fitness training, metabolic testing and customized fitness and nutrition plans. His new guide **The Better Back Guide: 6 Weeks to Improving Strength and Reducing Pain Without Surgery** teaches people how to reduce, eliminate and prevent chronic back pain using a six week program. You can read more about his guide and his other fitness guides and services at:

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Learn More about Back Pain at:

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