

MOTOR CONTROL EXERCISES REDUCE PERSISTENT LOW BACK PAIN

Motor control exercises, when performed in conjunction with other forms of therapy, can significantly reduce pain and disability in patients with persistent low back pain. The new systematic review was published in the January issue of *Physical Therapy (PTJ)*, the scientific journal of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). In addition to feeling less pain, patients performing these types of exercises are able to be more physically active and experience positive effects over a longer period of time than those who receive other treatments, according to researchers.

Motor control exercise, also known as specific stabilization exercise, is a new form of exercise for back pain that has gained the attention of researchers and health practitioners over the past decade. The exercise focuses on regaining control of the trunk muscles, also known as the transversus abdominis and multifidus, which support and control the spine. Previous studies of patients with low back pain have shown they are unable to properly control these muscles. Through motor control exercise, patients are taught how to isolate and “switch on” these muscles and then incorporate these movements into their normal activities. The trunk muscles can be trained to support the back while standing, walking and during other functional activities. These exercises provide good spinal position.

It is important to note that this form of exercise is different from going to the gym or going for a walk. The program relies upon a skilled clinician, such as a physical therapist, identifying the specific trunk muscles that are a problem and then working closely with patients to teach them how to get the muscles working properly again. The patient first learns to control these muscles in simple postures, then later in more challenging activities. The ultimate goal is for the patient to get the muscles to work to control and support the spine in those activities that previously caused pain.

High Health Costs

Low back pain is an international health problem with enormous economic and social costs. In America alone, the treatment cost of back pain is estimated to be \$86 billion per year or 9% of the country's total health expenditure. It's second only to the common cold for loss time at work. Your spine bears the brunt of bending, stooping, sitting and worst of all, lifting. The search for new ways to manage this old problem is critical in order to improve the health and quality of life of individuals who struggle with this condition. Physical therapy can be very beneficial, particularly if the patient is treated during the early onset of symptoms.

Physical therapists are highly-educated, licensed health care professionals who can help patients reduce pain, improve or restore mobility -- without expensive surgery or the side effects of medications. At Complete Physical Therapy LLC located in Riverdale, Maryland, we work one on one with patients who experience back pain and we establish specific stability exercises to support the spine. Our goal is to increase function and improve the quality of life.