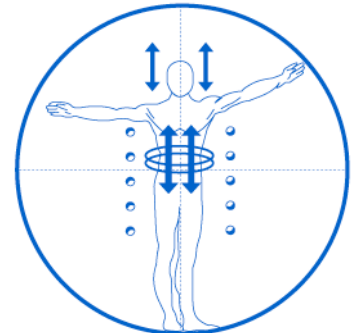


Core strength versus core stability: a patient guide.

Some people confuse the term 'core strength' with 'core stability' because they think the two terms mean essentially the same thing. Well they don't!

Core strength.

Exercise for low back pain has been used for many years with the assumption that improved control and support of the spine and pelvis will result in reduced pain. This is based on a model that argues that low back pain results from stimulation of nociceptors (pain nerves) due to poor control of the spinal structures. Exercise interventions based on this model focused on changing the strength and endurance of the trunk muscles to improve 'control'. This is an old and outdated approach.



Core stability.

More recently exercise focus has shifted to control and coordination of the trunk muscles. These philosophies incorporate factors such as re-education of hip and lumbar movement patterns, correction of muscle length and re-education of control of different muscle groups. These approaches that address control of the muscles are gaining support from randomised control trials.¹

The complication

Recent scientific developments are improving and changing our understanding of pain. Specifically in this context no discussion of low back pain is complete without discussing the complex interaction between biomechanics, psychology and the social elements of pain. As this series of articles progresses I will discuss the requirements for control of the bony spine, the motor strategies used by muscles and nerves to meet these requirements, how this system changes when people have low back pain and finally I will discuss my clinical strategy for exercise management of low back pain.

Summary: What the patient with poor core stability needs to know.

Core stability means the functional ability of the muscles to control movement.

The term 'Core strength' is outdated. Thus exercises like sit ups or heavy lifting which challenge strength not stability are **rarely** indicated clinically.

If a 'core' muscle is weak there will be a reason why. Strength training to improve this without resolving the reason why is very unlikely to improve stability.

The reason why a muscle is weak does not have to be purely biomechanical. This means a good practitioner will take time and ask lots of questions before committing to treatment.



Adam's pearl of wisdom: How to choose a practitioner.

Ask how long the appointment slots are. Does a practitioner run a conveyor belt practice with patients in and out in 20 or 30 minutes or do they take the time to thoroughly investigate these very complex issues?

At LMC we use 80minutes for initial consultations and 40minutes for follow ups!!

¹ If you are interested in this subject and would like details of further information please don't hesitate to contact me.