

Core Training to Relieve Lower Back Pain



After the common cold, lower back pain is the second most common reason for visits to the doctor. Although lower back pain is easy to recognize, its causes are many, varied and often unclear. Thus, one of the greatest challenges facing physical therapists is to match the suspected cause of the pain with the best combination of activities and therapies to provide relief.

Some people whose pain does not respond to general back exercises may benefit from **a progressive program of lumbar stabilization exercises**, also known as **core stability training**. Core training works the muscles that lie deep within the body. These muscles—the transverse abdominis, a flat muscle that wraps around the trunk; the pelvic floor muscles; and the lumbar multifidi, small muscles that run along the vertebrae—do not move much. Their job is to distribute forces applied to the spine and keep it stable and, in the case of pelvic floor muscles, to support the bladder, the intestines, the uterus (in females), and the urinary and anal sphincters.

Lumbar stabilization exercises activate these core muscles so they contract isometrically. In an isometric contraction, tension is developed in the muscle without movement, just as it would be if you pressed your arm forcefully against a doorframe or wall. Because correctly performing these exercises requires some coaching, they should be initiated under professional direction. We can teach you the correct way to do these exercises, many of which can be performed with little or no equipment.

Although core stabilization training is not a magic bullet to cure all back pain, many people find that working these deep muscles, along with other types of back pain therapy, can provide relief. If you are experiencing chronic lower back pain, consider discussing core stability training with us.