

There is no such thing as a back problem - just a strength problem

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Some Health and Fitness instructors have known for many years that strength training can eliminate back pain. However, until recently it tended to be a process of trial and error. Sometimes it helped, sometimes it did not and occasionally it may have even exacerbated the situation.

Recent research findings have provided us with a reliable method. The University of Florida is a global leader in research into back problems. It achieved this position through work on machines developed by Arthur Jones, who manufactured his first »MedX lumbar extension« machine in the 1980s. For this first time it was possible to anchor the pelvis and measure the strength of the lower back muscles. With the publication of measurements taken by these machines all other previous studies on this subject had to be assigned to the waste bin.

Tests on thousands of people produced a surprising picture. They showed that most people - including highly trained athletes - had very weak lumbar extensor muscles. The real surprise, though, was the extent of that weakness. However, if these muscles were exercised, maximum muscle strength was increased by several hundred percent! Moreover the degree of increase was directly related to the level of previous weakness, ie the less a muscle had been exercised the more it could be exercised and the greater the potential increase in strength.

According to leading orthopaedic specialists 80% of all back problems are caused by weak back muscles or to be more accurate a weakness in both lumbar extensors and the deep (autochthonous) muscles of the spine. The scientists from the University of Florida then developed a form of treatment and were soon achieving spectacular results in patients with chronic back problems.

Patients underwent a 12-week course, once or twice a week, of back strengthening therapy on MedX machines. At the end of the course they were free from pain. To remain free from pain all that was required was one training session every four weeks.