Healthy Back Institute®

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Extreme Health Hacks: Environmental Conditioning

By Jesse Cannone, CFT, CPRS, MFT

All your life you've probably heard proper diet and adequate exercise are two keys to good health. I agree. But it turns out there may be a third key to good health missing in our easy-going, climate-controlled modern lifestyle. Specifically, exposure to environmental temperature swings.

Think about it. Most Westerners spend the vast majority of their time indoors with a steady thermostat between 68 and 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Even their drive to and from work is air conditioned. But our ancestors faced major temperature fluctuations on a regular basis. Now research shows regular exposure to both extreme heat and cold may have profound health benefits.

Even if you've spent most of your life in a climate-controlled environment, if you're in reasonable health you can likely still benefit by introducing exposure to extreme heat and cold into your life. Here's how to get started and why you may want to give it a try.

Extreme Heat Health Hack

Almost everyone agrees a hot shower at the end of a long day feels amazing. But spending several minutes a day in a sauna, where temperatures typically range from 150° to 180° F, may actually save your life.

Researchers in Finland recently reported on the sauna habits of 1,628 men and women between the ages of 53 and 74, then noted their risk of stroke over a nearly 15-year period. Almost all of them had at least one sauna a week, but **stroke risk was 60% lower** for those who took four to seven per week compared to the one-a-week group across the board.

This is only the most recent evidence of sauna health benefits.

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livepainfree®

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Finns have long been known for their regular saunas, with roughly one sauna for every six people in the country. They believe it "hardens" them, making their bodies more resistant to illness. The evidence suggests there's truth to that as the health benefits of regular sauna bathing are numerous:

- Improves regulation of body temperature
- Stabilizes the autonomic nervous system (heart rate, digestion, respiration, etc.)
- Reduces risk of cardiovascular diseases
- Assists body's defense against free radicals
- Improves insulin-dependent glucose uptake
- Relieves pain and helps prevent acute pain from becoming chronic

Get Started: Use a sauna regularly. Five minutes or longer, four to seven times a week is optimal. Many health clubs and gyms include sauna privileges as part of membership. Large far infrared heating pads also provide many of the same benefits in the area of the body its used on. You can also take very hot baths but be careful not to use scalding hot water to avoid injury.

Cold Works, Too!

While hot showers are near-universally loved, cold showers not so much. In fact, their application is often recommended to suppress libido and as a mild form of torture for athletes and military trainees alike. But exposure to cold also has many health benefits.

Former SEAL Clint Emerson explained in a video to Business Insider last year that there's a method to the military's madness in subjecting recruits to cold water. Besides waking you up in a hurry, it vasoconstricts the entire body, squeezing out lactic acid following a heavy workout so you feel ready to go the next day for more training. In fact, professional athletes and elite forces alike use the technique regularly to train harder without injury.

While the Finns may have earned a reputation as kings of sauna, Dutchman Wim Hof has become known as the opposite: "The Iceman." At last check he still holds 21 Guinness world records for feats such as longest time swimming under ice, running a full marathon above the Arctic circle in only shorts, and taking the world's longest ice bath (just shy of two hours).

While that's admittedly super-extreme, you should lose your fear of cold and introduce your body to cold on a regular basis, too. Like extreme heat, regular exposure to cold brings myriad health benefits:

- Promotes circulatory system health
- Eases post-workout soreness from lactic acid buildup

- Improves insulin sensitivity in type-2 diabetics
- Lowers cytokine production to limit inflammation
- Burns more calories metabolically by activating more “brown fat”

Get Started: Good news, you don’t have to dive into ice water to start enjoying health benefits. Even jumping into a cold shower for 30 seconds or walking to the mailbox barefoot in cold weather helps kickstart your body’s cold response. And turning down the temp - and the blanket - in your bedroom makes a big difference, too. Feel free to work up to the more challenging barefoot snow walks in shorts and ice baths for extreme conditioning.

Ease Into the Change

If you’ve spent most of your recent life in climate-controlled environments, you’ll want to ease into the change as described above. Environmental conditioning means following a process of exposure that gradually increases your tolerance to extreme temperatures. While there appears to be health benefits to regular extreme temperature exposure, those in poor health or with any medical conditions should always consult their physician before starting.

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Know the Signs of Temperature Distress!

Start slow with environmental conditioning and give your body time to build tolerance to temperature extremes. Always know the signs of temperature distress and take immediate action if you or someone with you experiences any of them.

Heat Cramps

(Drink Water, Find Cool Shelter, Rest)

- Muscular Twitching
- Cramping
- Muscular Spasms in Arms, Legs or Abdomen

Heat Exhaustion

(Requires Medical Attention)

- Excessive Thirst
- Fatigue
- Lack of Coordination
- Increased Sweating
- Cool/Wet Skin
- Dizziness and/or Confusion

Heat Stroke

(Medical Emergency - Call 911)

- No Sweating
- Hot/Dry Skin
- Rapid Pulse
- Rapid Breathing
- Coma

Heat Stroke *continued*

- Seizure
- Dizziness and/or Confusion
- Loss of Consciousness

Hypothermia

(Find Heated Shelter, Wrap in Warm Clothes & Blanket, May Require Medical Attention)

- Shivering
- Loss of Judgment
- Slurred Speech
- Drowsiness
- Muscle Weakness

Frostbite

(Requires Medical Attention)

- White or Grayish–yellow Skin Area
- Skin That Feels Unusually Firm or Waxy
- Numbness in Body Parts Exposed to Cold, Especially the Nose, Ears, Feet, Hands and Skin

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The Lowdown on Hemp for Health

By Lane Kennedy, The Original Female Biohacker

While the birth of my son was a wonderful and exciting experience, one thing that wasn't particularly welcome was the neck and back pain that tagged along for the ride (luckily I don't hold it against him!).

Just when I thought my aches couldn't get any worse, I had a dental accident that threw my neck out. Suddenly my pain went from annoying to debilitating. Over the years I have tried everything to ease my pain - hypnotherapy, painkillers, more specialists than I even knew existed - and nothing worked.

In 2016, I went through nine months of intense physical therapy, only to be told there was nothing more they could do and I was pretty much stuck with the pain. Despite being on LDN (or Low Dose Naltrexone), which is generally considered an effective protocol for chronic pain, I was still regularly rating my pain as high as a 9 or 10 on the SUP (subjective units of pain) scale.

Then I was introduced to Phytocannabinoid Diol or hemp oil - and I can honestly say my life has been changed, for the better! Since I started using hemp my pain has been regularly reduced down to a 2 on the SUP scale and I am confident in its ability to help me get that down even lower.

While there is a time and a place for THC - specifically it is used medicinally to support anorexia in people suffering from HIV/AIDS as well as refractory nausea and vomiting in those undergoing chemotherapy - I'm far more interested in the positive effects hemp is having on my endocannabinoid system.

Now you might be thinking that I've been transformed into some sort of '60s flower child with all this hemp oil in my system but trust me when I say it doesn't work like that.

Most importantly, I want to share the benefits of this little-understood product with you.

What Is the Endocannabinoid System?

Before we can even begin talking about hemp

and its benefits, we need to understand how pain and hemp oil can be related. And that starts with the endocannabinoid system.

The endocannabinoid system (ECS) is a system of cannabinoid receptors naturally occurring within the brain and throughout the central nervous system. It's made up of neuromodulatory lipids and their receptors that help regulate and modulate nerve impulses. CB1 receptors are found in the brain and nervous system, while CB2 receptors are found in the immune system and associated organs.

The ECS system helps to control and regulate a variety of physiological and psychological processes including appetite, feelings of pain, sleep, memory and mood - which you might recognize as being related to a lot of the typical side effects of cannabis use, such as an intense craving for snack food.

All humans have an endocannabinoid system that we need to nourish and help our bodies to perform at their highest level. The fact that we're able to isolate the compounds in cannabis that have medicinal benefits from those with psychotropic side effects means that we're able to do this safely - whether we're looking to find a solution with seizures, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel syndrome, pain or even cancer.

The endocannabinoid system processes can be summarized as "relax, eat, sleep, forget and protect." These are the processes we need to function properly, so diseases or conditions that are related to these processes - such as migraines and fibromyalgia - can be associated with suboptimal functioning of the endocannabinoid system.

The endocannabinoid system can break down, which means that certain receptors and neural pathways stop signaling properly, which exacerbates the conditions I've previously mentioned. This can be caused by stress, poor diet and nutrient deficiencies (and a lack of omega 3 in our diet).

The endocannabinoid system was discovered in 1990 by Raphael Mechoulam, an Israeli organic chemist and professor of Medicinal Chemistry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, during his deep research and curiosity of the cannabis plant. He discovered that the ECS includes chemicals produced naturally by the body that mimic the activity of chemicals in the cannabis plant. In fact, this is how the ECS got its name.

Why Isn't the ECS Talked About When It's so Important?

Well, it boils down to the clear reality that this plant has been illegal and hard to get at since the beginning of the 19th century. It's been a challenge to study, with laws and enforcement from government institutions claiming it as unsafe.

A deficiency in the endocannabinoid system can potentially lead to migraines, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome, among many other conditions. Taking hemp oil orally allows your body to rebalance the endocannabinoid system and helps to relieve common symptoms of these conditions such as pain.

It has only been in recent years that the laws have started catching up with the studies. With medicinal marijuana legalized in many states and many restrictions on research into these hemp plants lifted, we're discovering more about the benefits every day.

What Is Cannabidiol?

Cannabidiol, or what I now call hemp oil, is one of 100 unique chemical compounds derived from the hemp plant, which are known as cannabinoids.

Our body creates its own endocannabinoids to nourish the endocannabinoid system that are structurally similar to the phytocannabinoids found in cannabis plants. By consuming cannabinoids, we're able to restore and nourish our ECS.

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When the endocannabinoid system breaks down - due to poor diet, stress or inflammation and disease - it can further negatively affect our health and wellbeing. The endocannabinoid system regulates sleep, memory, mood, appetite, temperature, pain sensations and the pleasure and reward centers of the brain.

How Do Cannabinoids Work?

While the body naturally produces cannabinoids to support the ECS system, we can still find ourselves deficient which can lead to a number of different conditions as outlined above. This can be similar to the effects on our body of vitamin deficiencies, for example, a Vitamin D deficiency can affect how our body absorbs calcium and in turn can lead to weakened bones and osteoporosis.

THC strongly stimulates the CB1 receptors, leading to increased feelings of hunger and the "heady" psychoactive feelings associated with cannabis use, but hemp is able to minimize or even block the psychoactive properties of THC and allow the positive effects of cannabidiol to take control and perform the vital neural processes that relieve pain, fight inflammation and even have antidepressant properties.

Hemp, on the other hand, is a weak agonist for the CB1 and CB2 receptors, but instead is able to modulate how other cannabinoids affect the receptors, which is how it reduces the psychoactive effects of THC. So rather than directly stimulating these receptors, it binds itself to an allosteric site on the receptor that allows it to regulate the interaction between the receptor and the cannabinoids, whether they are ingested or created by the body.

Will I Get High?

Despite the commonly held belief that anything that comes from cannabis is going to get you high and turn you into a munchies-craving stoner, hemp oil doesn't contain THC (known in scientific communities as tetrahydrocannabinol) which is the ingredient in marijuana that makes its users feel high.

Cannabinoid Diol, the active ingredient in hemp oil, not only blocks the psychoactive effects of THC (meaning regular hemp oil with less than 0.3% THC isn't going to get you high), it also helps the body to regulate feelings of pain, hunger and even your mood. It can help to ease stress and anxiety, and help regulate disordered eating habits.

In contrast, it has taken many years for the necessary advancements and research to create strains that are high in cannabinoid and low in THC, which counteracts the psychoactive side effects of THC, while still having a calming effect on the brain and body. These beneficial levels of Cannabinoid Diol/THC in hemp oil mean that you're not experiencing a "high" but your body is able to process the cannabidiols to fight pain and inflammation.

How to Get Started with Hemp

There is so much more to know about the health benefits of hemp than I have space for here. That's why I've written a research-backed special report, free for readers of Live Pain Free®, that explains in far more detail

Why Try Hemp Oil?

- ✓ Helps with pain
- ✓ Helps reduce seizures and convulsion
- ✓ Helps with fibromyalgia
- ✓ Helps with PMS
- ✓ Helps with headaches
- ✓ Helps with muscle cramps
- ✓ Helps with stress and anxiety
- ✓ Helps with nausea and vomiting
- ✓ Helps with inflammation
- ✓ Helps reduce blood sugar levels
- ✓ Helps ease psoriasis
- ✓ Helps suppress muscle spasms

how hemp helps many conditions including PMS, migraine, depression, anxiety, insomnia, diabetes and more.

Please visit www.upgradedwoman.com/livepainfree to get it free. If you'd like more information about using hemp to improve your health, I also invite you to reach out to me directly by scheduling a call with me from the same page.

With more than 20 years of experience in biohacking for health, while living in long-term recovery from alcoholism, Lane Kennedy brings a wealth of knowledge and passion for helping others find bio-individualized wellness. Since conquering her own health problems (an immunity syndrome) and chronic pain (with the help of cannabidiol), she's become a tireless advocate for anyone struggling or stressed and looking for revolutionary solutions. Connect with Lane via her website: www.upgradedwoman.com

Cannabis supports health in many ways including pain relief. Learn more from your member archives:

Interview: Dr. David Bearman - Medical Marijuana for Pain Relief

Article: Cannabis for Pain Relief by David Bearman, M.D. (October 2017)

Article: How CBD Oil Helped Me Recover from a Concussion by Steve Hefferon (October 2017)

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Mental Health or Physical Health: Which Is More Critical?

By Dr. David Hanscom

I have considered the question of whether mental health or physical health is more crucial since a young age. For years I believed physical health was the foundation of a productive life. However, since I have learned about the chemical effects of the mind on the body I now believe mental health is more important. Of course, mental health and physical health are linked. Nowhere is this more evident than with anxiety.

Anxiety is the sensation evoked in every living creature by a threat. The feelings are a result of the chemical surge of stress chemicals such as adrenaline, cortisol and histamine with its flight or fight effects on the body. Since it's a survival response, it's extremely unpleasant and we'll do anything to avoid it. It's the species who paid the most attention to the environmental cues that survived. Every second of human behavior revolves around avoiding anxiety. So, it's not only a matter of survival of the fittest, it's survival of the most anxious.

Consider the following:

Thoughts are your mental link to the environment that allows you to assess your situation second by second in order to make choices that allow you to first survive and then thrive. If our thoughts are pleasant, our bodies will secrete chemicals such as oxytocin,

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growth hormone and dopamine that create a sense of relaxation and well-being.

Conversely, if you feel stressed, your thoughts will create a chemical environment consisting of adrenaline, cortisol and other hormones that create a sense of insecurity and dread. Control is the antidote to anxiety. The anxiety brought on by these hormones motivates you to control yourself or the situation.

When you lose control, your body kicks in even more adrenaline to physically help you solve the problem and you'll feel angry. Anger is anxiety with a chemical kick. For example, if you were physically fighting someone for food to feed your family the adrenaline boost would increase your odds of winning.

Trapped in a Mental Overdrive

Neuroscience research has shown that unpleasant thoughts elicit the same neurochemical response as a physical threat. These cause anxiety even when there's no real threat. The problem is we can't escape our thoughts. Whether you continue to experience, suppress or mask them, the process continues. Your body is now under a sustained chemical assault and each organ system will respond in its own way.

Since you cannot escape or solve this neurochemical barrage, you will feel trapped and angry. If you are in a constant hypervigilant state, your body will be on continual overdrive. It's like driving your car 70 mph down the freeway in second or third gear. It will break down much sooner than if you were in fifth gear and cruising. There are more than 30 symptoms of a chronically stressed nervous system. I experienced 16 of them, including 15 years of chronic pain.

I am aware that life is not easy. Very few people can live their lives on "cruise." Additionally, avoiding stress can become its own stress. You cannot run from your thoughts, which can torment you regardless of your environment. In fact, when I was in the most severe period of my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) my mental distress was worse when I was less busy. OCD, by the way, is manifested by intrusive thoughts and extreme anxiety. Someday, I will write about my battle with it in more detail but the only metaphor I can use to describe the experience is "having a hot branding iron on my brain." The misery being in that hell of unrelenting anxiety is nearly indescribable.

Early Life Experiences Have a Lifelong Impact

The term I have chosen to represent the multitude of physical symptoms manifested by chronic stress is "Neurophysiologic Disorder" (NPD). Your thoughts are the neurologic input to your nervous system that creates a physiological response. We are programmed to gravitate toward the reward chemicals and avoid the stress ones. Within a pretty wide range we are able to conduct our lives in a functional and enjoyable manner – except when we can't.

The next few paragraphs were part of a proposal to address the effects of high ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores. The tools can and should be implemented beginning in elementary school. The research showed that higher ACE scores were associated multiple physical symptoms in adulthood. The problem is that your reactions to stress are greatly magnified if you have experienced prior severe stress. Your brain is constantly comparing the past and present and if the present resembles a traumatic event

from childhood, the response will be out of proportion to the circumstances.

How Early Stress Leads to Chronic Pain

There is a lot of anxiety created simply by going to school and being amongst other students who are all experiencing high anxiety. The worse the ACE load, the more anxiety a child will bring into the classroom.

The devastating impact of a high ACE score on mental and physical health is well documented. This does not even take into account the power struggle that occurs amongst these students to deal with unrelenting anxiety. Bullying, at the moment, is not even counted in the ACE score. Teaching students ways to decrease the hyperactive chemical response would lessen anxiety regardless of the severity of the ACE score.

There are several ways that untreated/unrecognized Neurophysiologic Disorder (NPD) manifests itself.

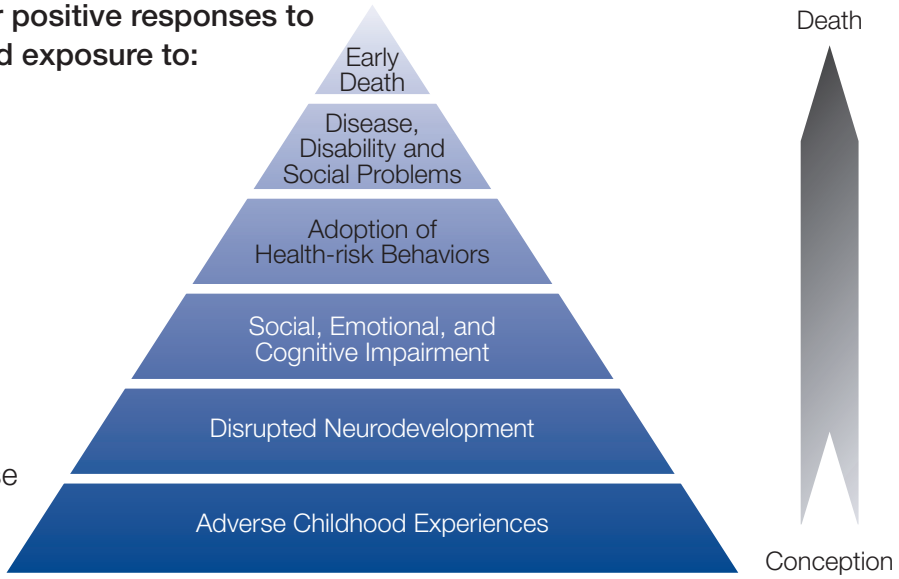
First, NPD can directly cause over 33 different physical symptoms. Each organ system in your body is bathed in stress chemicals and responds in its own unique way. Modern medicine focuses on treating symptoms instead of the root cause of a fired up nervous system. Many of these conditions often begin in childhood. Migraine headaches, insomnia, anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive thought patterns, body image disorders, stomach pain, neck pain, low back pain, depression and spastic bladder are just a few of these symptoms. Recent research has also documented the link between chronic stress and autoimmune disorders.

Second, anxiety is the result of sensory input that also drives anger. One common cause of anger is loss of control. When you lose your ability to control your anxiety, the anger will become intense. Anger is always destructive, including self-destructive. Although it may not become manifested during school years, it eventually results in complete disregard for personal health. This is in addition to the symptoms directly caused by the NPD. My observation is that complete neglect of your health is akin to a "slow suicide."

Third, anger is abusive. Chronic pain creates an indescribable depth of frustration. When you are angry, it is all about you. It is a survival response and you lose awareness of the needs of those around you. Lack of awareness is

ACE Score = 1 point each for positive responses to 10 questions about childhood exposure to:

- ❑ Physical abuse
- ❑ Emotional abuse
- ❑ Sexual abuse
- ❑ Physical neglect
- ❑ Emotional neglect
- ❑ Divorce / separation
- ❑ Domestic violence
- ❑ Household substance abuse
- ❑ Household mental illness
- ❑ Household member incarcerated



Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

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the essence of abuse. Families of patients in chronic pain become the targets of this deep anger, and hence the cycle of adverse childhood events continues. There is a high chance that these children will act out their frustrations at school. Also, their parents have often modeled anger as the normal way of dealing with adversity. Unrelenting anxiety and anger cause profound physical effects on your body and can lead to abusive situations. Pain = anger = abuse.

Tap into Your Unconscious Brain to Overcome NPD

No one intellectually wants to be sick or unhealthy. The solution lies in addressing pre-programmed behavioral patterns that are part of the unconscious brain. The unconscious brain is about one million times stronger than the conscious brain. Your conscious brain energies manifesting as "good intentions" or "will power" have no chance of solving the underlying problem. You must utilize strategies that stimulate your brain to rewire.

During my 15-year ordeal suffering with chronic pain, I lost all hope and began to work my way out by accident. It took me another five years to figure out what had happened and why I was able to regain my life. The last five years of neuroscience research is clarifying the problem and revealing the answers.

The essence of the solution is to quickly and repeatedly use techniques and tools that decrease your body's stress chemicals and reprogram your nervous system to have a lesser reaction to stress. Instead of focusing on the problem, you must train your brain to develop in a different and more enjoyable direction. In other words, you'll quit wasting energy trying to solve an unsolvable problem and move forward living your life. Paradoxically, as your consciousness shifts, your pain circuits will atrophy from disuse and the pain will diminish or disappear.

Chronic pain is solvable by: 1) awareness of the nature and components of chronic pain, 2) treating all aspects of it simultaneously and 3) taking full control of your care.

My book, "Back in Control: A Surgeon's Roadmap Out of Chronic Pain," presents the background and outlines the problem. It is a framework that breaks pain into its component parts and will enable you to find your personal solution.

The action plan of the DOC (Direct your Own Care) process is presented on my website, www.backincontrol.com. Look at stage one as the jumping off point and begin utilizing the suggestions today.

Large Breasts and Back Pain

By Steve Hefferon, CMT, PTA

Some find it difficult to see a downside to women with large breasts. But for the more than one million women who are – let us say "generously endowed" – it can be a source of considerable back pain. Some women, in fact, suffer with severe pain, deteriorating posture, and are at risk for spinal deformity and other repetitive stress injuries to the shoulders and upper extremities due to their disproportionately large breasts.

These problems result from changes in the normal anatomical structure caused by the excess weight on the chest and weak muscular support. Another fact related to this condition is that some women even feel ashamed and

actually try to hide their breasts by altering their posture and allowing their shoulders to roll forward. This abnormal posture places pressure on an area of the upper body near the shoulders called the thoracic outlet. When this occurs, a bundle of nerves and blood vessels can become compressed and cause pain and discomfort down the upper extremities.

Very large breasts not only can cause a reduction in the normal curve of the upper- and mid-back region but will potentially also cause severe lower back pain. When the upper vertebrae of the spine are altered, the lower vertebrae then assume more stress. The challenge for these women is to maintain an efficient posture through proper strengthening and "CORE" stabilization exercises.

Workouts May Make It Worse

High-impact exercise can be a challenge for women with large breasts. During vigorous workouts, breasts go through short vertical and linear movements, often with high intensity, resulting in increased strain on supporting tissue of the breast and the supporting back muscles. The results can often be highly problematic unless preventive measures are taken.

Physical therapy, posture exercises, and even pain medication are often a woman's first line of defense. Many doctors recommend purchasing customized bras or sports bras that can better distribute the substantial weight of large breasts across a larger area, thereby reducing muscle strain and improving overall breast positioning. This is especially important for women with a small frame. Since their breasts place stress on a more concentrated area, it may be necessary to incorporate all of these strategies to get relief.

Before any woman begins an exercise program intended to help with their back pain, they should have a full physical assessment performed to ensure any postural dysfunctions are accounted for and their associated muscle imbalances are corrected. Muscle imbalances can be described as one muscle group being overly strong and tight and the opposing muscle groups weaker and overly stretched out.

Postural dysfunctions can be described as an abnormal position of the pelvis or abnormal position of the upper neck, head and shoulders. As mentioned earlier, if a woman holds her shoulders forward in a rounded position, it combines the weight of the breasts internally rotated, depressed and adducted shoulders, which pulls the head forward of the shoulder. This in turn causes the neck to be pulled forward and down.

There are many other adapted responses that happen, including counter balancing the weight of the body in the upper spine as well as the position of the pelvis. The pelvis usually must accommodate the unnatural posture most while also having the greatest influence on the curvature on the spine.

What You Should Try Before Resorting to Surgery

The process described is repeated every day among millions of individuals. No single piece of high-tech diagnostic equipment available to the medical community can systematically piece it all together. Many chain reactions occur to cause low back pain, which is why a physical assessment is so crucial.

Assessments need to take into account the postural dysfunction of the upper neck, back and shoulders as well as the position of the pelvis. This assessment should identify which muscles are tight and overly strong and which muscles are weak and not able to support the body adequately. There needs to be a comprehensive plan to accomplish a new resting tension or elimination of the muscle imbalances.

Essentially a woman will be asked to do a very unbalanced workout, what we call muscle balance therapy, to return to a more balanced state and to a point that her body can support

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the extra physical stress throughout the rest of her life.

Failure to address the postural issues may result in a more drastic solution. There is a steadily increasing number of women choosing breast-reduction surgery. Make sure to use this option as a last resort, since there are many risks and negative side effects from this operation.

In addition to the external scars, scarring inside the breast may also occur. Until recently, doctors were concerned that this might interfere with the accuracy of a mammogram – and in doing so increase the risk of breast cancer.

But it turns out that for some women, breast examination and mammography may actually be easier to perform after a breast reduction. "From the standpoint of the physical exam, it may be more difficult to pick up a very small lesion [lump] in a woman with very large breasts," says Charles Finder, M.D., a radiologist in the Food and Drug Administration's Mammography Quality and Radiation Program.

Other drawbacks to breast-reduction surgery may include a lack of sensitivity in the nipple and a decrease in sexual response. Many doctors also caution that there can be a significant reduction in milk supply after surgery. Some women find they can't breast feed at all.

On top of that, the average cost of breast-reduction surgery in the U.S. is close to $6,000 and can run much higher depending on where you live. As a result, many insurance companies have written breast-reduction surgery out of their coverage completely.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to surgery that can bring relief to women who suffer from back pain caused by overly large breasts. Muscle balance therapy is a safe and effective way to restore some stability to the pelvis and spine and help the body tolerate the stress of everyday life for women with larger breasts.

Coming Next Month

Like my interview with Dr. Bernie Siegel in June? Then don't miss his special feature article next month sharing one of his most famous techniques for helping patients recover from even terminal illness!