



Tired of Muscle Spasms After an Injury? Can Strain Counterstrain Benefit You?

Strain-counterstrain Technique was originally developed by an osteopathic physician, Lawrence Jones, DO, FAAO. Strain-counterstrain technique is a method for reducing chronic and/or acute muscle spasm anywhere in the body. The big advantage of this technique is its passive pain-free approach to the patient. The patient often wonders how this technique can work when the therapist does not seem to be "doing anything".

The basics of treating a muscle spasm (a vicious cycle):

A protective mechanism of the body is called a muscle spasm. When the body perceives danger to a joint, the nervous system instructs the muscle to contract strongly to prevent movement that may cause damage. The muscle can stay in this state for a few minutes, days, even months to years. It can become chronic and then this mechanism rarely serves to help or protect the body any longer and can become detrimental. Please see the below diagram.



A vicious cycle is developed with pain, muscle guarding and muscle spasm.

How the technique works:

The therapist identifies the muscle in spasm by palpating the body and identifying "tender points". The therapist positions the body so the muscle is in a shortened position and holds the position for at least 90 seconds. At times, the position may be held for a few minutes waiting for changes in muscle. The therapist monitors tissue change and waits for optimum improvement to occur, which often results in the patient noting that the point is no longer painful. The therapist then puts the body back into its normal position. The therapist can do 3-4 points per session. If the spasm has been present for a long period of time, the patient may need multiple visits to unwind the spasms and find the original culprit of spasm and dysfunction.

***As a special note:** The tender points may not be at the exact place where pain is being felt. The tender points may be in the front of the body and referring the pain to the posterior aspect of the body. A person can be in multiple spasms and not have any pain. Each and every person tolerates a different level of spasms until it can become disabling. Often a "tickle spot" is a "tender point" that the body has compensated for and can be the cause of your pain and dysfunction.

IMGPT patients have had benefits from Strain Counterstrain treatments to the lumbar, thoracic, and cervical spinal spasms. Posterior and anterior rib spasms, which are hard to treat with standard therapy treatments, can show remarkable gains after only 3-4 visits. Tender points to the extremities after surgery are often present and with the passive nature of Strain Counterstrain can be treated safely.

If you have any tender points or know of anybody who has had chronic spasms that have failed conservative physical therapy treatments, please feel free to call IMGPT and discuss with the therapist if Strain Counterstrain may be an option.