

Lower-Crossed Syndrome

The Number One Source of Pain in the Lower Back



Centre for Chiropractic & Sports Rehabilitation

An integrative, biomechanical approach to the everyday sports and spinal injuries.

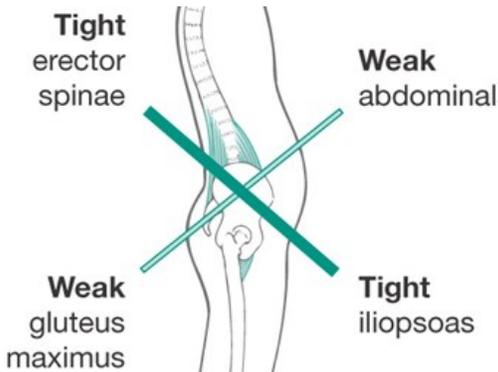


Figure 1: The Lower-Crossed Syndrome

Physiological Breakdown

The lower-crossed syndrome (LCS) is a predictable pattern of muscle weakness that is present in all bipeds. It is an inevitable result of gravity acting on a human through his or her lifetime, though LCS is notable worsened by spending extended periods of time loading your weight onto one leg or by spending extended periods of time sitting at a desk. As you sit or load for extended periods of time, your hip flexors will become shortened (tight). As a result, your brain will automatically inhibit the reciprocal muscles on the other side of your body: the glutes. To compensate for weakness in your glutes, your body will recruit synergistic muscles like the hamstrings and lower back to assist the glutes in their performance. The lower back and hamstrings are now performing tasks that they were never intended to perform, and

thus become tight.

As Figure 1 (above) illustrates, LCS results in a predictable posture: an excessive arching or rounding of the lower back, a flabby or protruding abdomen, and a flat butt. This sort of muscle imbalance places excessive stress on the structures of the lower back, which indicates why the LCS is one of the most prominent causes of lower-back pain.

Who does the Lower-Crossed Syndrome Affect?

Unfortunately, the Lower-Crossed Syndrome will affect every human over time; it is an inevitable result of gravity, and there's nothing we can do about that! We spend more time fighting against gravity as we age and therefore the LCS will affect us more as we grow older. Aside from the elderly, symptoms of the LCS tend to be more pronounced in those who work at a desk and people who load onto one leg when standing, sitting, or engaging in repeated athletic activities, for example, consistently over-arching your back when setting up for a golf stroke.

How is the Lower-Crossed Syndrome Treated?

While the Lower-Crossed Syndrome cannot be completely reversed, there is a set treatment that will manage your LCS symptoms *and* prepare your body to effectively handle LCS throughout your lifetime. Treatment consists of first addressing the tightness in your hip flexors and lower back, and then strengthening your glutes and abdominal muscles.

Loosening the tightness in your hip flexors and lower back will consist of soft-tissue work, active release, breaking up scar tissue with friction massage stretching, and physical manipulation. Breaking up friction massage and active release can be painful processes at times, but this pain will ultimately result in healing. We recommend that you keep an icepack in your freezer at all times so that you can ice any sore spots after treatment.

What can you do?

To ensure that your practitioner can make the most of your appointments, please come wearing loose garments. Loose-fitting shorts are preferred, as this will allow the doctor to access to your glutes, hips and lower back, and will facilitate stretching. Through the course of your appointments, we will prescribe exercises and stretches to do at home. These are integral to your progress, and we strongly suggest that you set aside 20 minutes a day to focus on your health by completing your prescribed exercises.

Adjusting your posture and work habits will have a hugely positive impact on the severity of your LCS symptoms. Set reminder alarms on your phone and decorate your office with post-it notes that remind you to stop loading onto one leg, and to get up from your computer every 20 minutes or so. Better posture—and improved health—will eventually become a habit!