

3 ways to get out of lumbar extension

Particularly in the athletic community we are seeing more and more extension related back problems. This is largely due to the large amount of time periods these athletes are spending in an extended position. Standing, walking, running and the majority of gym based exercise are in a position of relative extension.

In addition, due to anteriorly rotated pelvis position, commonly seen in upright standing sports, it means that these athletes are generally living in lumbar extension.



We know these guys hang out into extension but what can we do to try and fix them up. Below are three tips to help reduce lumbar extension.

Stretch the quads and hip flexors

We want to try get the pelvis out of an anteriorly tilted position and into a position of relative neutral or slight posterior tilt. The hip flexors and quads (mainly rectus femoris) produce this movement hence if we release them it will help us break the cycle and help us get into a neutral position.

The half kneeling quad and hip flexor stretch is a great exercise to use.

Start in a half kneeling position. Maintain a tall position through the chest and hips, lift your back leg up towards your buttock.

When you have lifted your back leg as far as possible use your hand to apply an additional stretch. Exhale and hold for 2 seconds for each repetition, before repeating on the opposite side.

Those with poor quad length can use a stretching band or place their rear leg against a wall to assist.



Stretch the lats

In addition to the muscles at the front of the hips the latissimus dorsi will also pull the lumbar spine into an extended position. Thus, ensuring good muscle length in the lats will help prevent against excessive extension. A common cheat for those lacking lat length is to extend through the lumbar spine. Thus, if we improve lat length we will reduce the need to compensate through the lumbar spine.

To conduct the stretch, take arms overhead against a wall. Keep the forearms against the wall, keep the chest tall and drop the body towards the floor. Ensure the ribs stay down and ensure that you don't extend through the lower back, as this is the movement we are trying to reverse. Exhale with each rep and hold for 2 seconds. Repeat for multiple repetitions.



Get the ribs down

By engaging the anterior core and getting the ribs down will assist in helping the pelvis into posterior tilt and thus out of a position of lumbar extension. This can be aided externally by a therapist or trainer during exercise.

We want to reduce the presence of rib flaring to get the pelvis out of anterior tilt and prevent a position as shown in the picture below.



Because so many athletes live in extension getting them out of it is not a quick fix. These are just three tips that will aid positioning and aim to get athletes out of an extended position.

Give them a try and let me know what you think.

Thanks for reading

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