



**Full Potential**  
Physical Therapy

*The Newsletter About Achieving  
and Maintaining Optimal Well-Being*



# MAKING BACK PAIN GO AWAY

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*Come Back  
to PT!*

**Give us a call at  
616-537-2864 to book  
your appointment today!**



# MAKING BACK PAIN GO AWAY

**This article is based on information from a deep dive into how back pain is impacting our population.**

Back pain is a common medical condition with 80% of adults experiencing it during their lifetime and it is the leading cause of disability worldwide. Amazingly, it is the third cause of visits to the doctor and the most recent estimate is that \$86 billion is spent annually on back pain treatment in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

Reading through the full article provided a perspective on how detrimental back pain is to our society. It is one of the most common reasons for missed work with over 186 million lost work days on average per year (the size of that number is hard to imagine) which not only affects the productivity of our society but creates a huge weight on the individual family with lost income, fear of worsening, and relationship stress.<sup>1</sup>

*These detrimental effects are augmented when it was discovered in 2017 that 25% of adults with back pain use opioids to help them*

*cope, which can carry some heavy consequences with dependence, mood changes and the inability to work and drive when under their influence.*

Surprisingly, several studies have shown that costs are reduced by 55% when introducing physical therapy prior to more invasive treatment options.<sup>1</sup> This is backed up by another study that reports a 60% reduction in back pain related costs with early intervention (within the first two weeks of onset).<sup>2</sup>

These studies validate the early use of physical therapy to address not only the pain but the reason for the pain, which can provide a better prognosis to avoid a chronic back pain condition. Most episodes of back pain improve within 6 weeks, but there is a significant percentage of patients who continue to have pain of a low-to-moderate level after 3 months.<sup>1</sup>

*(Continued Inside)*

These findings on early intervention pose a paradox because the tendency for doctors is to not refer to PT quickly. From 1997-2010, a retrospective study showed only 10% of primary care physicians referred their patients to a physical therapist as a first option.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, this indicates our profession needs to do a better job of communicating to physicians how we can help them with managing their back-pain patients. In addition, back pain patients need to understand this advantage as well when looking for the most effective help.

Raising awareness about the effectiveness of timely physical therapy is a big part of why we provide a monthly newsletter. Full Potential has been treating back pain for 27 years and fortunately, we have built positive relationships with local physicians over that time. Nevertheless, it is you who holds a notable influence on not only how but when you would like to address a back problem. Early action, even though it will have its costs, has a much better track record to get you back to feeling normal the quickest and with the least overall cost.

From treating back pain for the past 37 years, my observations have led me to believe one of the most detrimental courses of action is to remain too long in a passive care mode. This would include medicating, resting, massaging, adjusting, heating, etc. These actions can be helpful but ultimately the element which can weigh heavily on how self-reliant a back-pain patient can become relates to a customized strengthening program for each patient and being educated on the best ergonomic actions to reduce unnecessary stress to the spine. (See our article and video on raking as an example).

*In general, people become muscularly weaker over time in a predictable pattern if they are not exercising to minimize this effect.*

Gravity, negative habits, job type, pregnancy, sedentariness, etc. imbalances the muscle relationships over time and this becomes a notable factor in how the body will handle the daily stresses of living. Ultimately, regaining strength and flexibility is the ticket to better control over back pain. A full recovery often uses passive care strategies initially but will progress into an active program of strengthening,

stretching and functional exercise as the last leg to a fully rehabilitated back condition.

*In athletics, a trainer would never send an injured player back on the field without a thorough strengthening and conditioning program, to do so would invite reinjury.*

So why is it any different with people who have to reenter their game in life? People who have physical jobs, repetitively lift young children, groceries, or do yard and house work are operating on their playing field and need the necessary strength and conditioning to do so without compensating themselves back into an injured state. Yes, the demands are different in many ways, but you still are having to perform daily in your role and the stronger and smarter you are can make you more resilient to reinjury.

Take a look at how you have handled a back problem or even a knee or shoulder problem in the past. Have you handled it through the pain relief stage to the complete strengthening stage? This is how you avoid becoming one of the few who never fully leave their painful condition at the PT office. Treating only to pain relief may look good on the surface, but the demands in life are very good at finding the weak links in the system and exposing them with tightness and pain being the final result. And so, the cycle repeats itself and one concludes incorrectly, "I just have a bad back like my dad."

We want you to fully overcome your back condition; this is our specialty. If you have not accomplished this, then perhaps you have not strengthened to full "athlete" status. Call us to discuss your situation or talk to your doctor and get a referral. Shift your viewpoint and look at yourself as an athlete who wants their body to perform as needed for pleasure or work.

*To a stronger you,*

*Vincent Hauueken  
PT/Owner*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.startstanding.org/back-pain-statistics-and-facts/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4393575/#Sec1title>



# How Does a Google Review Help Everyone?

Last month, in the article “Did You Know,” I discussed how the referral process to physical therapy has become more complicated with the consolidation of physician practices into the major hospital systems in our area. As an independent practice, one of our primary counters to these changes is to help the public know who we are and how we have helped people overcome a pain problem.

This is where you come in; you are our best resource for educating the public on how we can help them. They, in turn, can communicate to their doctor on where they want to go for PT. Competition is a great equalizer in business and supporting small businesses with reviews helps us compete. And, we only exist because of results so we work hard to make our patients better. Everyone wins!

To leave a review, just scan the QR code and follow the instructions. Or, you can just search “physical therapy near me” and Full Potential will come up. Click on our business page and hit “review” and you got it!



*Thanks!*

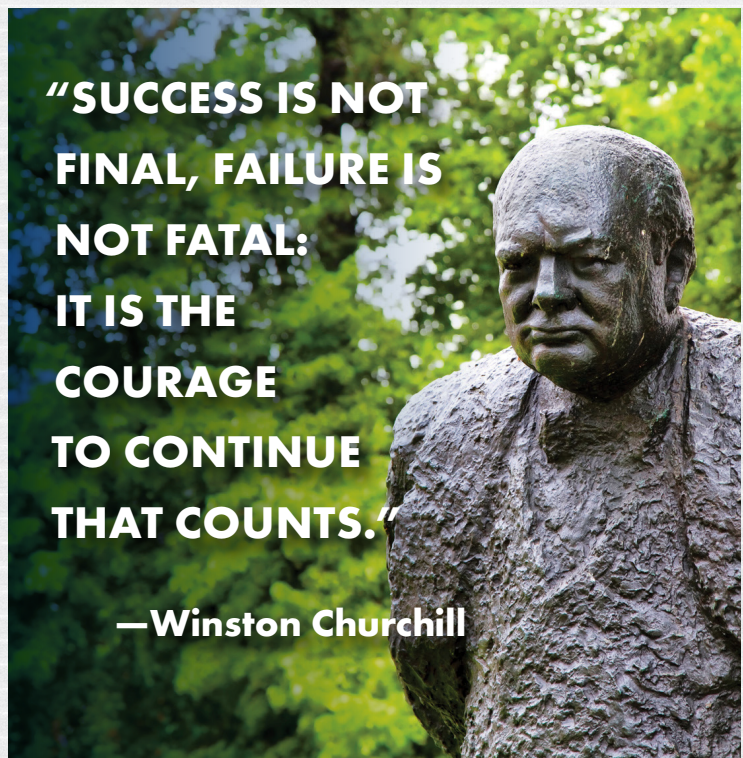
## **APOLOGY**

*In our last newsletter there was a number of grammatical errors and one of you was interested enough to inform me. The old adage, “haste makes waste” would apply here as the necessary scrutiny was not applied in editing that newsletter. So, I apologize for you having to wade through the poor grammar to get to the message in the articles. We (I) will do better.*



**“SUCCESS IS NOT  
FINAL, FAILURE IS  
NOT FATAL:  
IT IS THE  
COURAGE  
TO CONTINUE  
THAT COUNTS.”**

**—Winston Churchill**



**Nagging pain that won't go away? Call us at 616-537-2864 to book your appointment today!**



Perhaps this time of year is called fall because leaves will be perpetually falling to the ground over the next two months. If you live in a wooded area, you know what that means. A lower back that is sensitive to twisting, lifting, and bending is often put into jeopardy with the repetitive actions that go with fall clean up.

Raking is often at the heart of yard work this time of year and unfortunately it puts significant demands on the lower back even when it is in fairly good shape. The good news is one can rake with less back strain by following a few simple pointers. And, in fact, raking can become a good core exercise when approached with the right mechanics.

Yes, it could become a new form of exercise – aerobic raking. Well, maybe not, but it is great to be outside on a crisp fall day with rake in hand and enjoying the smells, sights, and sounds of this special time of year. Not every state can throw down the color like Michigan and if you can get out and enjoy it while getting some stuff done and not hurt your back then you have mixed work and pleasure in a great way.

Listed below are a few pointers but for a better visual understanding follow the QR code and watch how raking can be done with less strain and even make it a good abdominal muscle exercise.

1. Have a good stiff rake so your efforts translate to action, otherwise you have to work harder for the same effect.
2. Try to rake with your trunk facing sideways to the direction of your raking and make your strokes shorter to avoid finishing with a twist.
3. When you pull with your arms, push with your legs and avoid the twist which is stressful to the back.
4. The next key thing is to become a “switch raker” – reverse to the opposite side to balance the stresses on your joints and muscles. Do five pulls one way, then reverse and do five the opposite way, or find a number of reps that works for you and keep it balanced. This really helps to avoid the imbalanced stress on your back from only using one direction of raking.
5. Rake into a tarp to reduce the raking reps.
6. Take breaks, and overall divide the job of raking your yard into workable time frames in line with your level of conditioning and status of your back.
7. Do some simple stretches for your back and hips after you are done. 10 minutes of stretching could save you a few days of time to feel normal again.
8. Watch this video; follow the QR code to see how the technique is applied.



## We Want to Hear From You!

We love providing educational content for our Patients each month! Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to fill out our survey! This will allow us to provide the most relevant content, that YOU want to read about each month!



Has your pain come back? We can help! Call us at 616-537-2864 to book your appointment today!

# PATIENT *Success* STORY



I have had shoulder pain for 2 years. It is almost gone after 2 months of physical therapy. I have learned skills to keep it strong.

The clinic is clean, organized, and punctual. Reminders of appointments are helpful.

— *Sue B.*



*You can help someone else find THEIR Success Story  
— AND win a Meijer gift card!*

## PLAY THE REFERRAL GAME

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\_\_\_\_\_  
*Your Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Our New Patient's Name!*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date Of Referral*

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