

MUSCLE ENERGY TECHNIQUE

INTRODUCTION: Developed by osteopathic physician Dr. Fred Mitchell, the muscle energy technique (MET) is a noninvasive method of manual therapy that helps restore body balance in the soft tissues and skeletal structure. MET uses precise positioning of the body in conjunction with very light muscle contractions to re-educate muscles whose dysfunctional tone distorts the body and causes asymmetry. The technique is gentle and can effectively relieve a variety of musculoskeletal dysfunctions by repositioning or mobilizing joints, reducing inflammation, lengthening short muscles, strengthening weak muscles, and relieving tissue congestion.

HOW IT WORKS: The technique is based on the theory of reciprocal inhibition, meaning that the muscles on one side of a joint relax when the muscles on the other side of the joint contract. The patient contracts his/her muscles to have the desired effect on the opposite side of the joint by pushing against pressure (called the anti-force) provided by therapist. Each contraction further stretches the muscle.

INDICATIONS: MET has a wide range of applications, including the treatment of somatic dysfunction, decreased range of motion, scoliosis, sciatica, muscle pain and stiffness, muscular shortening, low back pain, muscle injury, respiratory dysfunction, tension, and uneven hips, legs, and arms.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: MET is not appropriate for patients who have fractures, avulsion injuries, severe osteoporosis, metastatic disease, or open wounds.

TREATMENT PROTOCOLS: During treatment, the patient (preferably wearing athletic clothing or loose fitting street clothes) generates gentle muscle contractions against resistance provided by the therapist. Special emphasis is placed on the lumbar spine, sacrum, and pelvis, which control the functional core of the body. During a typical session, the patient lies on a padded table and is asked to contract a muscle in the affected area for approximately ten seconds while overcoming a resistance to the contraction that is applied by the therapist. The contraction process may be repeated three times, helping stretch and lengthen the shortened, contracted, or spastic muscle. This strengthens the muscle group in the affected area, relieves pain, and improves mobility. A series of sessions is often recommended for best results, typically once or twice a week for 3 weeks.

