

Why It's Crucial to Examine Muscle Function.



1. Trauma Disrupts Neuromuscular Control

When a joint is injured — through a sprain, impact, or overuse — the damage isn't only mechanical.

It also disrupts the **reflex communication** between the joint's sensory receptors and the surrounding musculature.

- Mechanoreceptors (in ligaments and joint capsules) send altered feedback to the spinal cord and brain.
- This can cause **reflex inhibition** of key stabilising muscles.
- As a result, even after pain and swelling subside, the joint remains functionally unstable.

Example:

After an ankle sprain, the peroneal muscles often become reflexively inhibited — predisposing the patient to repeated sprains.

2. Compensation Patterns Develop

When stabilising muscles lose proper activation, the body compensates by overusing secondary muscles.

This leads to altered movement patterns, increased joint stress, and a higher risk of **chronic pain or re-injury**.

- Stronger, superficial muscles “take over” for inhibited stabilisers.
- The patient may look strong on gross testing, but functionally they’re weak or imbalanced.



Example:

After a shoulder trauma, the deltoid may dominate movement while rotator cuff stabilisers fail to engage — increasing shear forces and pain.

3. Structural Healing ≠ Functional Recovery

Ligaments, capsules, and tendons may heal structurally, but unless neuromuscular control is restored, **true joint stability is not regained**.

Testing muscle function allows you to see if:

- Muscles activate at the right time
- They generate sufficient force
- They are neurologically connected to joint proprioception

Without this, even a “healed” joint can remain unstable and vulnerable.

4. Early Identification Prevents Chronicity

By examining muscle function early — ideally as soon as acute inflammation subsides — clinicians can:

- Identify inhibited muscles before maladaptive patterns become fixed
- Re-establish proper activation through specific neuromuscular facilitation
- Accelerate return to function and reduce recurrence

5. Neuromuscular Testing Creates Patient Confidence

When patients *feel* an immediate improvement in muscle strength or control after activation techniques, they gain:

- A tangible sense of progress
- Motivation to continue treatment
- Trust in the practitioner's precision

This clinical feedback loop strengthens patient engagement and adherence.

In Summary

Muscle function testing is not just about strength — it's about communication between the nervous system and the joint.

Examining it ensures that healing is not only structural but also functional, coordinated, and durable.

Want to know more about about how a Neuromuscular approach can remove a lot of frustrations.



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