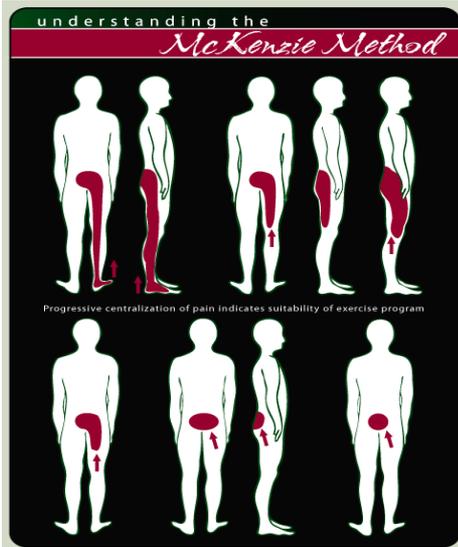


# McKenzie Method

**Physical Therapy Treatment  
for lower back pain**

by Amy Romano

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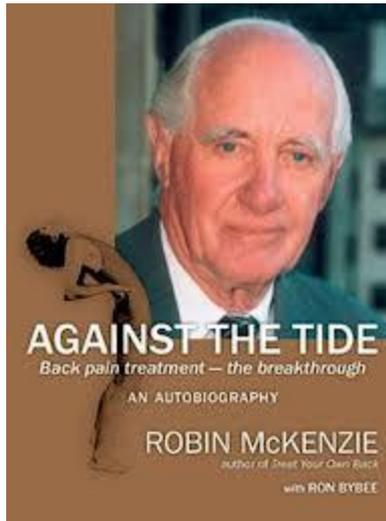


## What is the McKenzie Method?

The **McKenzie method** (also known as **MDT** = **Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy**) is a comprehensive method of care primarily used in physical therapy.

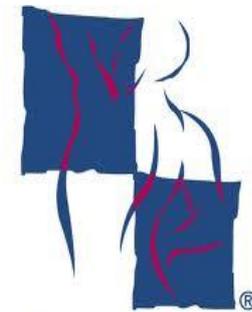
- It is a philosophy of active patient involvement and education for back, neck and extremity issues.
- It is grounded in finding a **cause** and **effect** relationship between the positions the patient usually assumes while sitting, standing or moving, and the location of pain as a result of those positions or activities. The therapeutic approach requires a patient to move through a series of activities and test movements to gauge the patient's pain response. The approach then uses that information to develop an exercise program designed to centralize or alleviate the pain
- The goal of McKenzie Method is to centralize the pain or move the pain from the leg into the low back.

# The McKenzie Method Background:



McKenzie believes and states “that self treatment is the best way to achieve a lasting improvement of back pain and neck pain”

Robin McKenzie. Born 1931, New Zealand, Physical Therapist.



McKenzie Method

- Robin McKenzie developed the method in the late 50s.
- In 1981 he launched the concept which he called *Mechanical Diagnosis and Therapy (MDT)* - a system encompassing assessment (evaluation), diagnosis and treatment for the spine and extremities.
- Most low back pain is "mechanical" in origin, meaning that an applied force caused the pain. **A basic philosophy of McKenzie's theory is that the reverse force can probably abolish the pain and restore function.**

# The McKenzie Method: Three Steps To Success

## Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention :

- **1.) Assessment:** The McKenzie assessment consists of taking a patient history and performing a physical exam. Both are used to gauge the degree of impairment as well as identify any red flags that might be contrary to exercise-based treatment (e.g. fracture, tumor, infections, or systemic inflammatory disease).
- During the McKenzie physical examination, patients are taken through movements that help classify the patient and determine the best treatment approach. The movements are intended to either increase or decrease symptoms. For example, patients may be asked to perform single and/or repeated flexion or extension movements forward and backward.
- A McKenzie assessment can eliminate the need for expensive and/or invasive procedures

# McKenzie Method

- **2.) Treatment** McKenzie treatment prescribes a series of individualized exercises. The emphasis is on active patient involvement, which minimizes the number of visits to the clinic.
- Ultimately, most patients can successfully treat themselves when provided the necessary knowledge and tools. For patients with more difficult mechanical problems, a certified McKenzie clinician can provide advanced hands-on techniques until the patient can self administer.
  
- **3.) Prevention** By learning how to self-treat the current problem, patients gain hands-on knowledge on how to minimize the risk of recurrence and to rapidly deal with recurrence if it occurs. The likelihood of problems persisting can more likely be prevented through self-maintenance.
- It is important for the patient undergoing the McKenzie method of treatment to know what to do to manage any future low back pain episodes. **Education of the patient is considered 'mission critical' in order to realize sustained pain relief.'**

# McKenzie Therapy Classifications

## Three Classifications:

- **Postural Syndrome:** is the result of prolonged positions or postures that can affect muscles, tendons, or joint surfaces. Pain may be local and reproducible when end range positions, such as slouching, are maintained for sustained periods of time.
- **Dysfunction Syndrome:** Implies some sort of adaptive shortening, scarring or adherence of connective tissue causing discomfort. A dysfunction may be intermittent or chronic, but its hallmark is a consistent movement loss and pain at the end range of movement. When the patient moves away from end range their pain is decreased.
- **Derangement Syndrome:** is the most common syndrome of the three. Certain movements and particular movement patterns can cause more sensitivity. Such as a flexion or extension, the symptoms (low back pain) become either more central (just in the low back) or less intense.

# McKenzie Exercises



Figure 1. Seated



Figure 2. Standing

Figure 3. Lying Prone



Figure 4. Progress to elbows



Figure 5. Full press up



# More McKenzie Exercises

Figure 6. Lying Supine



Figure 7. Knees bent

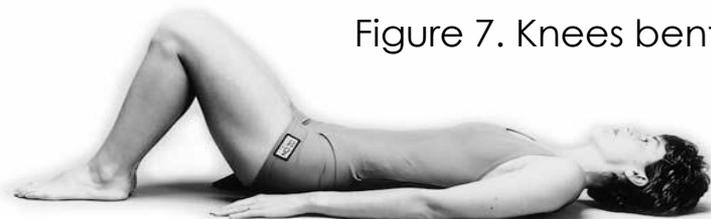


Figure 8.  
Knees to  
Chest



Figure 10.  
Flex to  
Floor

Figure 9.  
Flex with  
hands  
behind seat



# McKenzie Method Examples of Movement:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDJUpwXlbYA>

Prone laying Position

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVMCGK4tc4U>

Press ups



# Impact in Physical Therapy

- **The McKenzie Method** is well-known throughout the spine community among most surgeons and many physical therapists are familiar with it.
- It is commonly used in diagnosis and treatment of low back pain, neck pain and peripheral joint complaints.
- Research has shown that McKenzie assessment procedures to be as reliable as costly diagnostic imaging (i.e., x-rays, MRIs) to determine the source of the problem and quickly identify responders and non-responders.
- It is now taught worldwide.



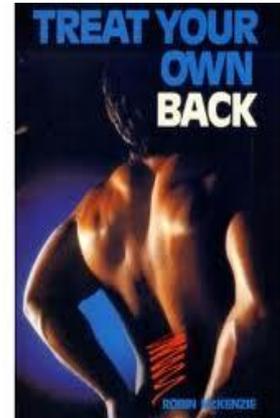
# For more information on the McKenzie Method :

## McKenzie Method Education

**For the Patient:** For over 40 years, Robin McKenzie's system of examination and treatment for non-specific spinal pain has been taught and used by clinicians worldwide. Find all of McKenzie's best selling books at OTP.

<http://optp.com/McKenzie-Method-Education/McKenzie-Method.aspx>

**For the PTA/PT:** The McKenzie Institute®, USA  
CENTER FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY IN MECHANICAL DIAGNOSIS AND  
THERAPY [http://www.mckenziemdt.org/index\\_us.cfm](http://www.mckenziemdt.org/index_us.cfm)



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*The McKenzie Institute®*, USA. 2013 The McKenzie Institute International., 2013. Web. 1 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.mckenziemdt.org/method.cfm>>.

