

There are different types of muscles in the body. Skeletal muscles are attached to the bones and are responsible for body movement. Visceral muscles are found within certain organs and glands and are responsible for a variety of functions related to those tissues. Cardiac muscles are responsible for the pumping action of the heart. There are muscles in the walls of the arteries that regulate the diameter of the arteries which regulates blood flow and blood pressure in the body.

Skeletal muscles are often blamed for a lot of the pain that people suffer. Frequently back pain is diagnosed as a pulled muscle or a muscle spasm and is treated with muscle relaxants. What many people don't realize and many doctors overlook, is that all muscles are controlled by nerves. A muscle rarely contracts without a nerve instructing it to do so. Most muscle spasms are simply responding to instructions from a nerve. Treating the muscle can result in short term pain relief, but it won't correct the underlying problem.

I have a young patient who had trouble walking. Her mother had her working with a physical therapist to help train the muscles to move more normally. She had some improvement, but not a significant amount. Her mother brought her to see me and within four visits, she was walking normally. The difference in the treatment approach was that the physical therapist focused on the muscles and I focused on the nerves.

The toddler had a small problem with her spine that was not detected by her pediatrician. That problem was interfering with the normal function of the nerves that came out of the spine at that level and those nerves controlled the coordination of her leg muscles. By correcting the cause of the problem, we were able to achieve much more rapid results than by treating the muscles.

Keep this in mind whenever you receive a diagnosis of a problem involving a muscle. It may not be the muscle that is the true source of the problem. Treating the muscle may not provide the desired result or the problem may become a recurring one.

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