



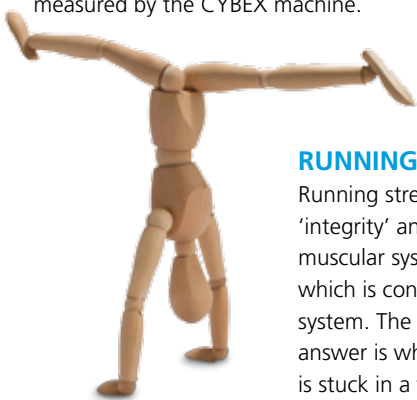
ASK AN EXPERT

# 'Strength' Without The Gym!

There is more to successful running performance than your shoes, heart monitor or the camber of the road. Significant invisible forces in your body play a major role in your performance and enjoyment while running. **Adrian Stevens**, physiotherapist and kinesiologist, explains how.

By releasing the build up of harmful responses to stress, we are able to correctly align our spinal posture and ensure the efficient flow of energy through our bodies. Combine this with enhancing blood flow to, and lymphatic drainage from our muscles, and we are able to improve our muscular 'strength' and therefore, athletic performance.

Traditionally, strength has been equated to how much an athlete can lift or push, and can be measured with amazing technology such as the CYBEX isokinetic machine. Consider the action involved in running; as one leg extends forward, the opposite arm does the same. As the quadriceps contract, the hamstring must relax so that the knee can extend and the runner can move forward. Running 'strength' is so much more than the weight an athlete can lift, or for that matter, the height of the graph as measured by the CYBEX machine.



## RUNNING STRENGTH

Running strength is dependent on the 'integrity' and balance of the neuro-muscular system in an athlete's body, which is controlled by the nervous system. The question we need to answer is whether the nervous system is stuck in a fight or flight survival

mode, or thriving and operating at its full capacity. If, in order to perform at our peak, we need our nervous system to thrive, then surely we need to release our response to stress and align our spines correctly. Our bodies respond to physical, emotional, nutritional and even energetic stresses in an amazing manner that ensures our survival. But the very responses that ensure our survival can be detrimental to our athletic performance.

Fortunately, our nervous system responds to stresses in a predictable manner. If we eradicate these responses or bad habits, then we are able to optimise the function of our neuro-muscular system, correctly align our spine and enhance the function and performance of our body. The foundation of a more efficient and a good athletic performance is a correctly functioning and balanced nervous system.

Electricity travels through the nervous system and ensures the correct function of all our muscles. On a more subtle level, this electricity is seen as the essence of our life force or energy. It needs to be balanced for optimal function and therefore, performance. This is where age old, traditional, oriental medicine fuses with a scientific and logical view of the nervous system.

## THE FLOW OF ENERGY

The core of the traditional view is that if we have a balanced flow of energy, electricity, or 'chi' through the body, we have optimal health and function. Is this any different to 'if our neuro-muscular system is functioning at an optimal level we reach our peak performance'?

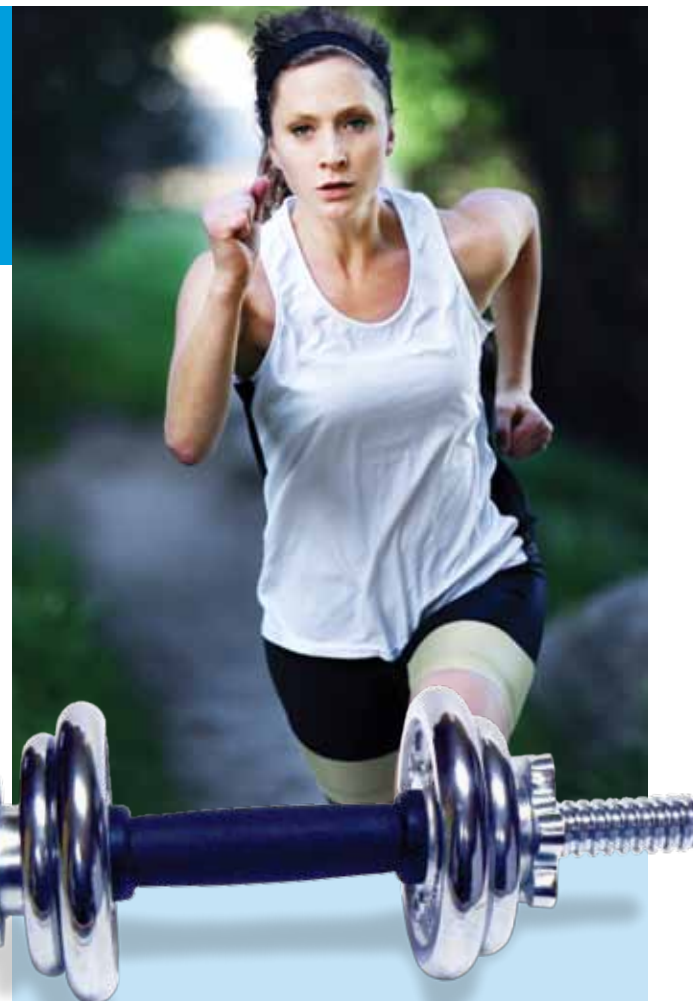
What is interesting, is that the correct flow of electricity through the central nervous system corresponds to the optimal flow of chi up and down the spine and confirms the necessity for having the correct posture. This can be likened to the battery of all our 'strength'. It has been shown in research dating back to the 1960s, that every muscle is related to one of the traditional meridians or channels of energy flow. This same research reveals that by manipulating this energy flow, using acupuncture, one can enhance or even detract from a muscle's performance. If we have an optimal flow of electricity or chi, we will have superb neuro-muscular balance and better athletic performance. This delicate balance can, however, be upset by the physical, emotional, nutritional and even energetic stresses of life.



## THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

Even when our nervous and energetic systems are operating at their peak, our muscles still need oxygenation and nutrition to function at their best. The by-products or waste materials produced by our muscles' work must also be efficiently removed and processed by our body to maintain efficient performance. This is achieved largely through our lymphatic system.

This is not a new concept. There is research to support this that dates back as far as the 1930s, when Dr. Terence Bennett discovered specific reflex points that enhance the blood flow to each muscle in the body. At the same time, Dr. Frank Chapman discovered similar reflexes that efficiently drain the lymph or metabolic waste from individual organs. In the 1960s, Dr. George Goodheart combined this knowledge to show how these reflex points can be combined and used to enhance muscle function and 'strength', thereby improving athletic performance.



## ENHANCING ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

If we ensure correct posture and spinal alignment, we ensure the optimum flow of nervous energy and electricity through the body. This, in turn, enhances athletic performance and strength. We need to support this increased ability with blood flow to the muscles and lymphatic and waste drainage from the muscles.

Combine these factors and you will increase your strength and performance without a visit to the gym!



**ADRIAN STEVENS**  
Modern Athlete Expert

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BSc Physiotherapy (Wits)

Adrian has been in practice for 15 years and integrates complementary medicine such as acupuncture, kinesiology, Sacro-Occipital Therapy, Neuro-Organizational Technique and Body Alignment with his treatments. He also developed his well-known Integration® Technique which is aimed at achieving a structural, bio-chemical, psychological, energetic balance and overall optimal health.



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