

Cycling with FMT

Katherine Kulp

Bicycles are taking Delhi by storm. Whether you're donning spandex and hopping onto a road bike costing Rs 2 lakh to race along MG Road's barricaded cycling lane or renting a bike for a leisurely cruise from one of the new cycle stands springing up around the Metro stations — bicycling is a great way to get some cardio, work the large muscles of the legs and possibly even get to your destination faster. No matter what your age or athletic prowess, biking is accessible and enjoyable. Making sure that your biking form is efficient will

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ensure that biking continues to be enjoyable, and doesn't translate into musculoskeletal aches and pains down the road.

Correct posture on a cycle is far different than the correct posture of sitting and standing. One of the common errors when on a bicycle is adopting a sway back posture instead of an arched posture akin to a bridge. When in a sway back, the joints of the back are locked out, and thus the force of the road translates to the joints of the back. This becomes problematic, especially when hitting the ubiquitous bumps, potholes and debris on the road. Adopting an arched back allows more even force distribution, protecting your spine. This alignment also ensures that the Core



muscles that stabilize the spine are able to activate, and thus protect the back. Maintaining an arch in the spine gives an active push upwards into the shoulder blades and bend of the elbows as opposed to either hanging from the collarbones or locking out the elbows. Again, this posture ensures that the scapular stabilizers are able to activate, improving your endurance on the bike, and decreasing strain specifically on the neck and arms.

The correct posture allows you to activate the most efficient pattern of muscle firing in each and every pedal stroke, translating to the maximal power for your hard work. Have you noticed a lot of side-to-side movement as you're sitting on the seat? This likely indicates an inability to access the core stabilizers of the back to keep your trunk still, while the large muscles of the leg coordinate to push the pedals. The most efficient pedal stroke you will achieve is when the core activates first, keeping the back stable, and allowing the quadriceps and hamstring muscles to push and pull at full power.

You may notice that you are able to attain good posture and a still trunk early in the ride, but are unable to do so as the ride continues. This implies that you must work on the endurance of your shoulder stabilizers and core. If you continue to have difficulty attaining a better posture, there may be an underlying issue in your body limiting you. A Functional Manual Therapist can help you diagnose and solve the exact issue, and create a plan to get you biking efficiently.

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is a Certified Functional Manual Therapist at VARDAN, a wellness initiative by The Times Group in association with the Institute of Physical Art, USA

Functional Manual Therapy™ (FMT) is a comprehensive approach to physiotherapy, which identifies and facilitates your existing potential through an in-depth examination and treatment of your mechanical capacity, neuromuscular function and motor control. Discover your potential to have less pain and function better with FMT!

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