



Bed Rest for Your Back Pain? Not the Best Idea

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Upwards of 80 percent of adults suffer at least one episode of back pain in their lifetime, which means you've already felt the pain, are feeling it now or will feel it before you know it. And chances are good that, like so many others, your first thought will be to get off your feet, lie down and rest. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that unless the pain is severe or accompanied by other symptoms, such as pain radiating down the legs, rest is exactly the *opposite* strategy if you're trying to relieve your back pain.

If you're suffering from back pain, staying active is an important piece of advice to follow in the majority of cases. That means avoiding bed rest, prolonged stretches of sitting, standing or inactivity; and doing all the things you usually do, within reason (no heavy lifting or intense physical activity, including twisting or other dramatic movements that could make the pain worse).

While it may sound counterintuitive, abundant research suggests activity can help reduce the pain and shorten recovery time in most cases of noncomplicated back pain. In fact, one study that summarized findings from an international task force on back pain stated, among other findings / recommendations: 1) bed rest is contraindicated in subacute and chronic cases of low back pain; in acute cases, bed rest should neither be enforced nor prescribed; and if authorized (based on pain indication), bed rest should be for the shortest duration possible.



The theory is relatively simple, if you think about it: Inactivity can make your spine and back muscles tight and stiff, increasing the pain, particularly when you bend or stretch. Prolonged inactivity can also make you weaker, not to mention that evidence suggests the longer you stay in bed with pain, the more likely that your pain will become chronic / more disabling, often because you avoid moving for fear it will exacerbate the pain.

Of course, the first step when suffering back pain is to make a visit with a health care provider who can evaluate your pain, make sure there's nothing more serious going on, and then offer treatment and self-care recommendations (including activity) to help relieve it. Enter your doctor of chiropractic, the experts in treating spinal pain.