

Advice to rest in bed versus advice to stay active for acute low-back pain and sciatica (2010)

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The best evidence in back and neck pain care

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Overview of the study

Objectives

- To determine the effects of advice to rest in bed or stay active for patients with acute low-back pain or sciatica

Methods

- Evidence current up to 30 May 2009
- Participants: Age between 16 and 80, who had acute LBP or exacerbations of chronic pain lasting less than six weeks
- Intervention: advice to rest in bed/ to stay active
- Outcomes measured: pain, back-specific functional status, overall disability (e.g. length of sick leave, return to work), quality of life, adverse events

Results & Conclusion

- 10 studies (1923 participants) included.

Treatment	Evidence	Quality of evidence
Advice to rest in bed	Little or no difference between groups with exercises, advice to rest in bed or stay active for patients with acute low back pain	Low
	Little or no difference between physiotherapy, advice to rest in bed or stay active for patients with sciatica	Low
	Advice to stay active has small benefits in functional improvement for patients with acute LBP compared to advice to rest in bed	Moderate

⇒ Advice to stay active is probably slightly more effective than bed rest for people with acute LBP, whereas for patients with sciatica, little or no difference is seen between advice to rest in bed and advice to stay active.