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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PATIENTS IN ACUTE
BACK PAIN AND/OR LEG PAIN

Acute back pain can be very disabling and often time's people say it is the worst pain they have ever experienced in their lives. The causes for this condition are quite varied, but they are rarely life threatening. Most often muscles & discs, which are between the bones, can displace and irritate nerves. It can occur after heavy lifting or sometimes without any knowledge of a precipitating incident. Sometimes people can experience severe back pain after simply bending improperly.

At this point you have been evaluated in our office and sent home with instructions. Many times people forget what is said because they are in severe pain. That is the reason for this information sheet.

LUMBAR SUPPORTS:

If you have been given a lumbar support, you should wear it if it provides significant relief. Take it off when eating, sleeping, bathing or if it is causing discomfort. This brace acts to distribute weight away from problematic areas. In some cases, the patient feels that the lumbar support is uncomfortable and does not appear to help. If this occurs, take the brace off. You may find that if you try it at a later time it may be more helpful then.

As your symptoms improve, use of the brace should be weaned down. Do not wear a brace regularly for more than eight days. Overuse of this brace is believed to cause muscle weakness and prolong the condition.

COLD PACKS:

Cold packs are useful in reducing muscle spasm, decreasing pain, and controlling inflammation. Cold packs should be used over the area of pain with at least one layer of cloth in between. It should be used no more than 20 minutes at a time. Wait at least 20 minutes between uses. The cold can be used as many times as convenient throughout the day. If the cold appears to aggravate your condition, discontinue use. It is worthwhile to invest in a reusable cold pack that covers your whole lower back or neck. They can be purchased at most surgical supply stores. We recommend the oversized cold pack made by Chattanooga Corp. which is available at Moby Drugs 226 Main Street Farmingdale 516-249-6629/516-249-MOBY.

ACTIVITY:

In this acute stage it is important for you to take it easy, avoid prolonged upright sitting, bending or lifting. Some light activity may at times reduce muscle spasm, but be careful as not to further aggravate the condition. We like to see people get back to work as soon as possible, but occasionally, depending on your occupation, you may need to miss some time. The first activity should involve walking; gradually increasing the amount you walk each day. We also recommend stretching exercises that are noted below.

REST:

Do not sleep on the couch or very soft mattress. Sleep on a moderately firm mattress or on a thickly carpeted floor. Two comfortable postures are on your back with pillows under your knees and under your head, or on your side with your knees bent and a pillow between your knees. If all else fails, you can try lying on your stomach with two pillows under your waist.

RARE SERIOUS CAUSES OF LOW BACK PAIN:

Most cases of back pain, as noted above, are mechanical in nature and do not require medical or surgical intervention. Other less common causes for back pain include gall bladder problems, pancreatic problems, Pilonoidal cysts, kidney or urinary problems, shingles, aneurysms, Lyme disease, infections of the bones, and metastatic tumors. These conditions have different presentations. The nature of the symptoms is different and the physical examination would have different findings. X-rays can sometimes exhibit these conditions. Chiropractors are well trained to identify these red flags and make appropriate referrals. If we suspect your conditions might fall into one of these categories we will recommend appropriate referrals for consultation and testing.

EXERCISE:

In this acute stage we only recommend a few types of exercise that allows stretching of the lumbar musculature. One is lying on your back and pulling your knees to your chest one at a time, then both. The other is sitting in a chair, leaning forward and putting your head between your knees. Hold each position for a few seconds and then release.

SUPPLEMENTS for pinched nerves (i.e. sciatica, carpal tunnel, radiculitis, and numbness):

Take B-Complex and Omega 3 Fatty Acids. You can have them delivered in a day to your front door from Metagenics (800-638-2848). Ask for Neurosol (Code: NEURO). It has both B-Complex and Omega 3 Fatty Acids. If you have long standing joint pain you should take Glucosamine Sulfate (Code: GL005) to help nourish the joint surfaces. Ask me about details. Vitamin C has been shown to reduce muscle spasm, 500 mg. every three hours. Vitamin C is recommended while in acute stage. If this aggravates your stomach discontinue use. We also recommend natural herb formulas that include Valerian Root. Most people can take this without stomach upset or side effects.

REFERRALS FOR OTHER DOCTORS AND TESTS:

For a number of different reasons we may refer you to consult with other professionals. We refer patients to orthopedists, massage therapists, acupuncturists, neurologists, neuropsychologists, anesthesiologists, TMJ specialists, general practitioners or other chiropractors. If your case requires consultation with others, or if you feel that you would like to consult with one of them, we will provide names of offices in your geographic region. Additionally, we will try to find other doctors that participate in your insurance plan.

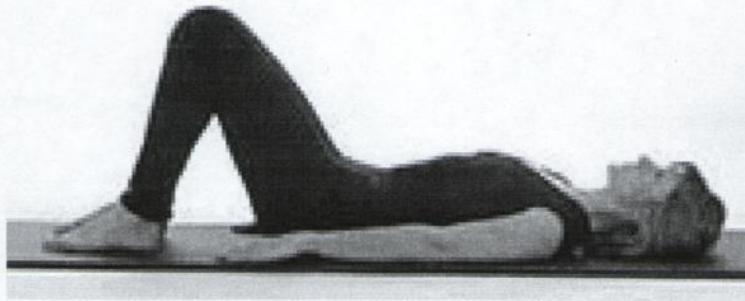
When patients do not respond to care within a reasonable time period, we typically send them for further diagnostic tests such as lab and urine, MRI's or neurological testing.

RECOVERY:

Most people with severe acute low back pain see some improvement within seven to ten days. Many times improvement takes place in cycles. You may experience a few good days followed by a couple of bad days, but eventually the days that you feel good become more frequent and better; the bad days occur less and are not as severe.

It is essential that as symptoms resolve the patient follow through with the recommended treatment plans and does these rehabilitative exercises. It is also important to try to identify contributing factors to your condition and minimize the risk of reoccurrence. Back pain is a condition that can significantly affect the quality of one's life. The pain you are experiencing is a sign of an underlying spinal problem, which needs to be addressed even after your symptoms have resolved. Your recovery is a joint effort between this office and yourself. We invite any questions concerning your condition. You are welcome to call the office, call Dr. Priestley at home (516) 470-0454 or call Dr. Wider's cell phone at (516) 713-4662.

Icing Instructions to Control Inflammation and Reduce Spinal Pain



There are many misconceptions about the use of ice versus heat for pain. Even though ice may not be as comfortable as heat, heating can actually make your problems worse when used inappropriately. Please read the following instructions carefully to avoid improper application.

- 1) Ice causes tissues to contract, and slows down circulation in order to reduce inflammation (swelling), and numbs the affected areas.
- 2) Ice is to be applied to areas of inflammation and immediately after injury.
- 3) Apply an ice pack directly on the spine, in the area of pain or tenderness, or in areas of inflammation.
- 4) ALWAYS cover the ice pack with a layer of paper towel or thin cloth such as a tee shirt. This will prevent intense cold and possible frostbite to the skin.
- 5) Leave the ice on for 15-20 minutes at a time and NO LONGER, otherwise you will actually increase swelling.
- 6) Apply ice once per hour when in pain or after an injury.
- 7) Position – lie flat on the floor with your knees bent and place the ice under the involved region. See the figure above.
- 8) If sore following your spinal exercises or traction, you should ONLY use cold packs, not heat!

Note: Moist heat (damp warm towel) may be used only when NO INFLAMMATION exists. Most heat packs can reduce overall stiffness to joints and muscles. However, never use dry heating pads nor use heat on a new injury. If you are sore immediately following postural exercises and traction ONLY use cold packs, NEVER heat.