

[IMAGE]

Back Pain Not Cured by Back Exercises Alone

Chiropractors and other health care providers often prescribe specific types of exercise to help their patients strengthen and mobilize the lower back. However, a growing body of evidence suggests that targeting the back does not always help relieve back pain, and that in some instances, it may even aggravate the condition. The results of a recent study add to this evidence, and imply that general "recreational" exercises may do a better job of easing back pain than specific exercises.

In the study, 681 patients with low back pain were randomized into two groups and tracked for 18 months. People who participated in "recreational physical activities" such as brisk walking for three or more hours per week were more likely to report low levels of back pain, disability, and psychological distress. By contrast, those who performed exercises designed specifically for their backs were more likely to experience back pain and disability.

Exactly why specific back exercises may increase back pain remains unclear; people may perform them incorrectly, or they may not be prescribed a specific exercise that could benefit their condition. Whatever the reason, staying active also seems to play a key role in reducing back pain. If you have back pain, talk to your doctor of chiropractic about a wellness plan that includes various types of activities, along with a balanced diet, to help you achieve optimal well-being. For more information, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/exercise.html.

Hurwitz EL, Morgenstern H, Chiao C. Effects of recreational physical activity and back exercises on low back pain and psychological distress: findings from the UCLA Low Back Pain Study. *American Journal of Public Health*, October 2005;95(10):1817-1824.

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