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Dealing with Back Pain

A fascinating study out of Europe is suggesting the possibility of treating – or possibly curing – chronic lower back pain with antibiotics! Apparently, in about half of patients with slipped discs and bone swelling, the injury site had been invaded by a bacterium commonly associated with skin/acne. Those that tested positive for the bacterium were treated with antibiotics and about 80% of these patients were cured. Larger studies are needed to prove the results.

Conservative treatment is often best

An analysis of more than 10 years of back treatment data is demonstrating that back pain is "over diagnosed" and "over treated." Most back pain will resolve in less than 3 months with conservative treatment: over-the-counter pain relievers, ice/heat application and gentle exercise, but evidence shows high rates of invasive tests, surgeries and prescriptions for potent narcotics. It's expensive and typically doesn't change the outcome – and potentially makes things worse.

Too much rest can be a bad thing for back pain

Bed rest used to be recommended for back pain, but it's now thought that extended bed rest can do more harm than good. Better to limit lying down to only a few hours at a time and for no more than the first two days. Many studies indicate the returning to normal activities as soon as possible, with rest as needed, is most beneficial. Excessive bed rest can trigger other health problems: muscle wasting, constipation, blood clots and even depression.

Nothing replaces lifting properly – use your legs protect your back

Using a back belt does not replace the need to lift properly. Studies are showing that the use of these belts in the workplace is not reducing back injuries. Wearers seem to think the belts offer protection, allowing them to lift more than they should. The rules are the same: Face your load and keep it close to your body, engage your core muscles, but lift from a squat position – using your legs. Don't twist your body – and ask for help if the load is heavy.

Your pharmacist is well-versed in approaching health care with the minimum intervention necessary and a healthy dose of common sense, talk with them if you have back pain – they can help you feel your best.