

Health Update: Herniated Disks

"Does space travel cure back pain?"

When astronauts go into a weightless environment, the disks in the spine begin to swell with fluid. Because the spine normally has a lot of weight on it, in anti-gravity there is a lack of compression on the spine. This causes the disks to decompress making the spine longer. The spinal cord and nerves do not stretch much and do not adapt well to this change in length of the spine.

As far as space travel and back pain, decompression for several days tends to be too much of a good thing. After a long trip in space, the astronaut can gain a few inches in height. This extreme stretch of the spinal column can cause a lot of back pain.

Bed rest also decompresses the spine. But bed rest for more than two days will actually increase low back pain. Besides lengthening the spine substantially, spinal muscles do not get much work while in a weightless environment.

With the DRX9000™, decompression of the spine is achieved by loading the spine in a way that counters the pull of your muscles, which they tend to do in conventional traction. This loading causes a slight degree of decompression of the disk. This slight decompression can sometimes be enough to take pressure off of a nerve. In some patients, decompression treatment causes a negative pressure to develop inside of the disk. This negative pressure may then "draw in" the protruding disk material.

Multiple treatments with gradual decompression for about 40 minutes is the aim of the DRX9000™. Preliminary studies show that the DRX9000™ may help patients with back pain through its decompression effects.

So space travel does not cure back pain, but the principles of spinal decompression can be applied here on earth. By decompressing the spine for a few minutes over several weeks, some of the gravity effects on the spine are reversed.

The disk may be moved away from a painful nerve while the vertebrae are separated during decompression. The DRX9000™ can also have the pull angled in such a way that the loading is applied to a particular spinal vertebra. In the patient with a herniated or bulging disc and back or leg pain, the DRX9000™ decompression treatment may be a solution.

If you are considering elective back surgery for a bulging disk, the DRX9000™ is another conservative treatment option that you can now consider.

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