

# FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50+



## Low Back Pain (LBP) and Sex

### Introduction

You maybe wondering why a fitness and wellness newsletter for older adults is discussing sex. The answer is easy, most older adults have experienced some form of back pain significant enough to alter their ability to perform activities of daily living that require lifting, bending or carrying. The same percentage have found that sexual intercourse can create significant back pain. Sexual activity has long been regarded by the World Health Organization as a measure of health, disability and an indicator of quality of life.

LBP during and after sexual intercourse is a common problem and until recently a completely unresearched topic. Researchers from the University of Waterloo's faculty of Applied Health Science (full disclosure— my alma mater and faculty) published, in the prestigious journal Spine in September 2014, a ground breaking article documenting the way the spine moves during intercourse, and discovered exactly which positions are best for avoiding different types of back pain.

This newsletter will review their finding and recommendations so that those currently suffering or those who potentially, in the future, could suffer from this form of disability (virtually all of us) will have a better understanding of ways / positions that can be utilized so that the quality of life, on a sexual basis, can be maintained.

### Research Technique

The study combined electromagnetic and infrared motion capture systems similar to those used by filmmakers and video game producers for full computer graphic character animation. Ten couples were studied when attempting common sex positions (missionary, doggy-style and spooning). Electrodes were hooked up to abdominal and lower back muscles and these monitored how hard the muscles had to work during sex.

The goal was to determine the position and angle of the spine at each moment in time during intercourse and see if each position engaged the core musculature (abdominals, hip and lower back muscles) differently.

The hypothesis was that when it comes to avoiding back pain during sex, all positions are created equal.

### Did You Know

#### Global Research Impact

When the peer-reviewed journal Spine published "Male Spine Motion During Coitus: Implications for the Low Back Patient" in September, the paper quickly attracted international media attention for its capacity to improve couples' health and well-being. Within the first week, more than 300 media outlets in 43 countries covered the study, reaching a global audience of more than 29 million .

#### Award Winning Work

The research and guidelines were so innovative that the researchers won the prestigious Best Paper Award at the 40th Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Lumbar Spine.

#### Life Changing Potential

" For the first time ever, health care practitioners have the tools to make scientifically—sound recommendations to couples who avoid or reduce sexual activity because of back pain. The research has the potential to improve quality of life—and love life—for many couples." - Researcher

# Research Results and Guidelines

## Results

1. Sex positions that are suitable for one type of back pain, aren't recommended for another.
2. The findings contradict the long-held belief that spooning— where couples lie on their sides curled in the same direction— is the most spine— friendly position for men and women with back problems.
3. Flexion (bending forward) and extension (backward arching) are the two most common motions of the spine that can trigger low back pain.
  - A. If a patient finds flexion to be painful, they will find relief in positions that produce extension in the spine.
  - B. If a patient finds extension to be painful, they will find relief in positions that produce flexion in the spine.
4. Men should use hip-hinging motions rather than thrusting by bending with the spines.

## Guidelines

**Note** – The guidelines are based on the two most common types of back pain.

### 1. Flexion Motion Intolerant

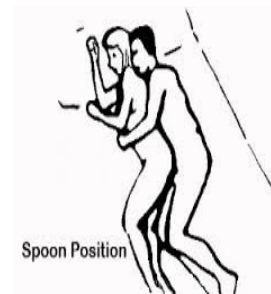
- your back hurts when you bend forward to touch your toes or sit for long periods of time.

Recommendation:

- Avoid rounding the back so to not put undue stress on the lumbar intervertebral discs and spinal nerves.

Best Position for Men— doggy style.

Best Position for Women— spooning or doggy style.  
( women supports her upper body with her hands, not elbows.



### 2. Extension-Motion Intolerant

- your back hurts when you arch your back or lay on your stomach.

Recommendation:

- avoid backward arching of your back so to not put pressure on the lumbar posterior facet joints

Best position for Men— spooning or missionary with the man supporting his upper body on his elbows as opposed to his hands

Best position for women— missionary, especially while flexing at the hips and knees.

