Enfield Health & Wellness Center
Therapy Options Bulletin for Medical Professionals

The Sequelae of Bed Rest

Elderly Patients Lose Muscle Mass at Three Times the Normal Rate

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One-to-One Treatment Always with a Licensed Professional

Your Therapy Team
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Jennifer Cavanaugh, PTA
Kevin Sadowski, BSN, RN, DC, Cert. MDT

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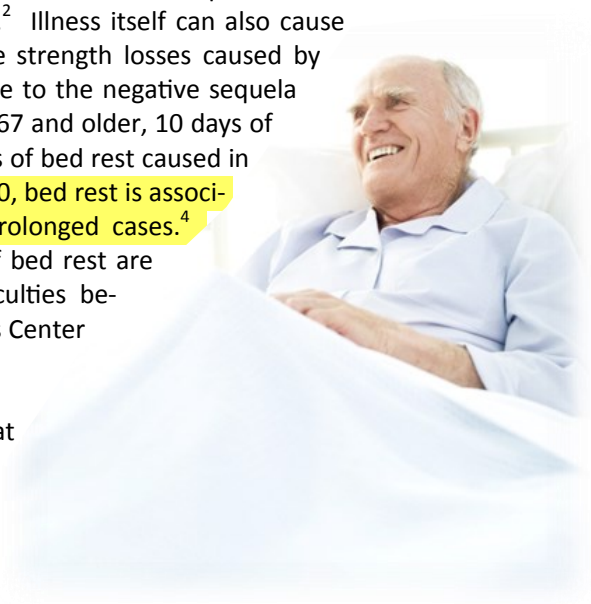
Bed rest serves as a time-honored recommendation for illness and some injuries, and it is prescribed more often around flu season. A normal muscle, at complete rest, in the absence of illness, loses up to 15% of its strength each week.[1] During bed rest, the first muscles to become atrophied are the trunk and lower extremity muscles involved in gait and upright posture.[2] Illness itself can also cause atrophy of the skeletal muscles, over and above the strength losses caused by rest. Your older patients prove particularly vulnerable to the negative sequela of rest. Among a test sample of healthy subjects age 67 and older, 10 days of bed rest resulted in more lean tissue loss than 28 days of bed rest caused in younger test subjects.[3] For patients over the age of 70, bed rest is associated with a major, new disability in one-third of prolonged cases.[4] Among elderly patients, when the negative effects of bed rest are not addressed assertively, injury or prolonged difficulties become more likely. Refer to Enfield Health & Wellnesss Center to help these patients restore their former ability.



Research has found that during periods of bed rest at home elderly patients tend to spend more time than needed resting in bed or sitting.[4] This stems largely from a lack of confidence and fear of self-injury inspired by the sudden loss of strength and fitness. After the injury has healed or illness has abated, many elderly patients still experience considerable risks associated with their period of rest. Rate of recovery from disuse weakness is slower than the rate of loss. With intensive exercise, the average patient takes 2.5 times longer than the period of rest to regain lost strength.[5] Older patients may take even longer because age brings loss of myocellular plasticity which blunts the hypertrophic response.[6,7] The fact of the matter is that most elderly patients do not engage in intensive exercise after periods of bed rest and are more likely to quietly decrease their daily activities and self-care. Fall injuries, medication errors, and other problems become more likely during the months following bed rest. Enfield Health & Wellness Center can efficiently develop a safe exercise program that will help your older patients maximize their recovery.

Certified in Vestibular Rehabilitation

Pictured Left: Melissa A. Doten, MPT, LMT, Director of Physical Therapy

Melissa Doten, MPT, LMT, Director of Physical Therapy, is certified in vestibular rehabilitation through the American Physical Therapy Association and Emory University School of Medicine. This advanced certification verifies expertise in assessment and treatment of vertigo, dizziness, spinning sensation, and other balance complaints.

Enfield Health & Wellness Center

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