

5. Should you stop all activity when in pain?

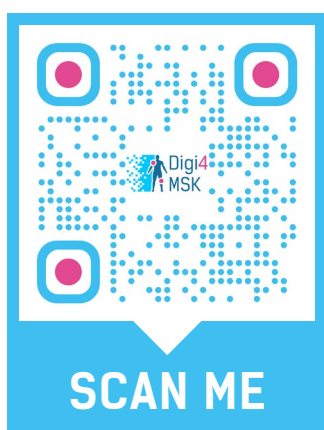
Mateo, 51, manages a small grocery store. His days are long, filled with lifting boxes, standing, and constant movement. One morning, after unloading a delivery truck, he felt a sudden pull in his lower back. The pain caught him by surprise. *"I'd better not move for a few days"*, he thought.

At first, the plan seemed to work—lying down gave him relief. But as the week went by, getting out of bed became harder. His back felt stiff, and even simple things like tying his shoes or carrying a shopping bag made him wince.

Concerned, he went to his family doctor, who found no serious injury but advised him to stay attentive and to move gently if possible. Still unsure, Mateo decided to rest a little longer. A week later, his pharmacist noticed him buying another box of painkillers and asked how he was feeling. *"Still sore"* Mateo said, *"I'm afraid to make it worse"*. The pharmacist nodded and suggested that he speak to the physiotherapist at the nearby clinic, who could show him ways to move safely.

Mateo hesitated. *"Move? When it hurts?"* he thought. Yet the stiffness and frustration were becoming worse than the pain itself. That night, he wondered if staying still really was the safest choice—or if it was keeping him from getting better.

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Skills you can build by watching the video:

- Understanding why avoiding all movement can slow recovery and increase stiffness.
- Recognizing when rest is useful and when gentle activity is more effective.
- Learning how different healthcare professionals—doctors, pharmacists, and exercise specialists—can guide safe, gradual movement during pain.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/vVJFwe4INZI>

5.1. Why is it not helpful to stop all movement?

Taking a break from certain activities can be beneficial if you are in pain, but not moving at all can make things worse:

1. Without movement, muscles and joints can become stiff, making the pain feel worse.
2. Inactivity leads to gradual loss of muscle mass, making it difficult to return to normal activities.
3. The nervous system can become more sensitive if the body is inactive for a long time.
4. Gentle exercise and physical activity in general promote blood flow, which helps circulate oxygen and endorphins, the positive hormones, throughout the body.

5.2. When is rest appropriate?

Although movement has a positive effect on pain, there are certain situations where exercise should be limited:

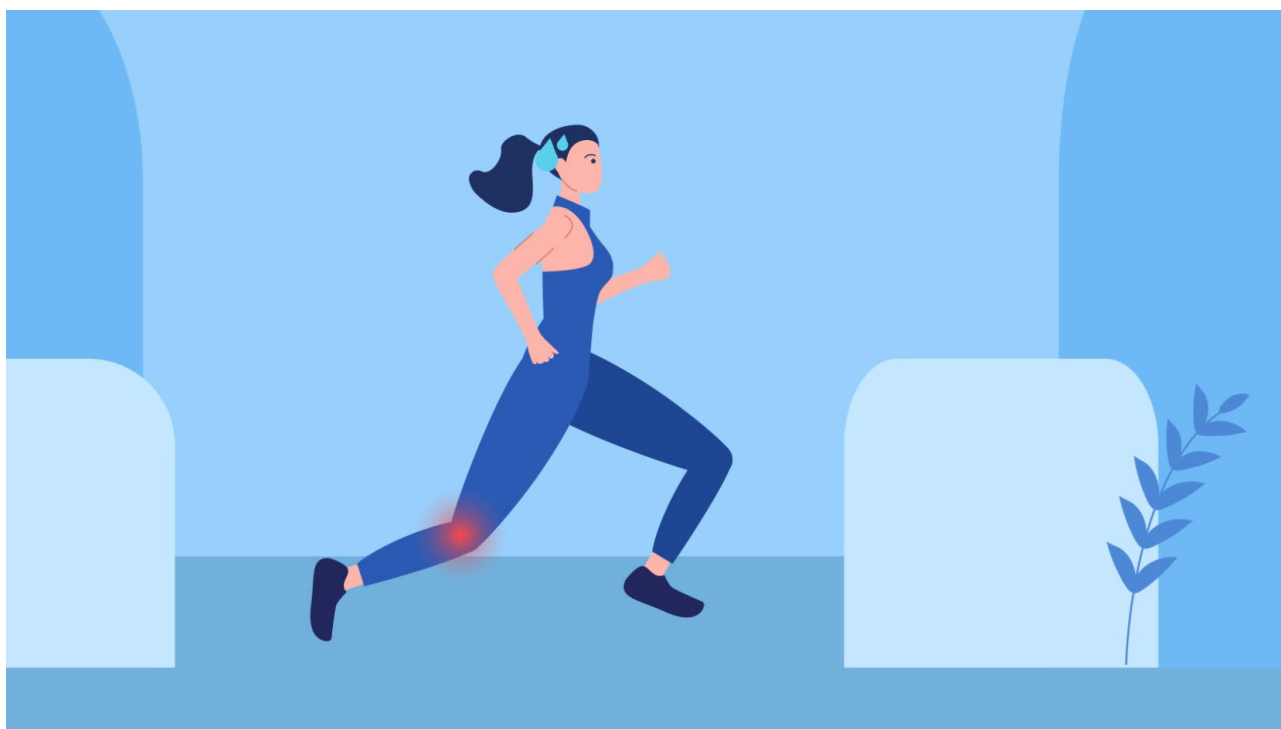
1. If you have severe pain that is made worse by movement. For example, if movement makes the pain worse or very sharp, take a break and try again later. If the pain persists or progresses, you should see a medical doctor.
2. If there are significant signs of injury, such as recent change in the appearance of the limb related to trauma, see a healthcare professional.
3. If the pain is accompanied by other unusual symptoms, such as numbness or fever, see a doctor for an examination.

5.3. How to keep moving safely?

Instead of giving up all physical activity, try changing the way you move. Here are some safe ways to stay active:

1. Do low-impact activities. Activities such as walking, cycling or water aerobics are good examples.
2. Modify your movements. Do not stop doing the activities you enjoy but adjust their intensity or range of motion to suit your condition but keep moving. Get an exercise professional such as a physiotherapist to help you do this.
3. Increase your activity gradually. Start with small movements or low intensity and slowly increase as your body gets used to them.

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Takeaway messages:

When you are in pain, stopping all movement is not usually the best choice. Light activity can help reduce pain and stiffness, keep your muscles strong and improve your well-being. If you are not sure, speak to your healthcare professional!