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## Physical Therapy Shortens ICU Stay

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TUESDAY, Oct. 23 (HealthDay News) -- Providing physical therapy to respiratory patients in the intensive care unit can shorten the time they have to spend in the hospital, researchers report.

Respiratory failure patients in the ICU who received mobility therapy within 48 hours after the insertion of a breathing tube stayed in the hospital an average of three days less than patients who didn't have the therapy, say researchers from Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, in Winston-Salem, N.C.

The shorter hospital stay among patients who received therapy included a reduction of time in the ICU of more than a day, the researchers reported.

A treatment called "initial passive range of motion" therapy was given to patients by nursing assistants who flexed the joints of the patients' upper and lower limbs three times a day, seven days a week. As the patients improved, they received more advanced therapy from a physical therapist.

The therapy was safe for patients and didn't increase hospital costs because the salaries of the staffers who did the mobility therapy were offset by the shorter patient stays in the hospital, the researchers noted.

"Although there are data for efficacy of exercise for emphysema patients and for congestive heart failure patients in the outpatient setting, this was the first time for ICU administration of exercise as a therapeutic agent," lead investigator Dr. Peter Morris, associate professor in the section on pulmonary, critical care, allergy and immunologic diseases, said in a prepared statement.

The findings were presented Tuesday at the national meeting of the American College of Chest Physicians, in Chicago.

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HealthDay

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