

The New York Times

Body

Weather May Not Affect Back Pain

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July 16, 2014 1:30 pm

Many people think the weather affects their back pain, but a new study shows they are probably wrong.

Australian researchers studied 993 cases of sudden, acute back pain in primary care clinics in 2011 and 2012. They gathered weather information from Australia's Bureau of Meteorology. Then they compared the weather when each patient first noticed back pain to the weather one week before and one month before.

The study, published online in *Arthritis Care & Research*, found no association of temperature, relative humidity, barometric pressure or precipitation with episodes of pain. Wind speed and gusts were associated with a slight increase in the risk of back pain, but the effect was not clinically significant.

The findings, the authors write, apply only to back pain, and they draw no conclusions about the effect of weather on pain from arthritis, fibromyalgia or other diseases.

"There are things you can do about back pain," said the senior author, Chris Maher, a professor at the George Institute for Global Health at the University of Sydney, "like being careful when you lift, avoiding long standing, maintaining healthy physical activity and weight range, and avoiding a stressful work environment. Rather than worry about the weather," he added, "worry about these other things, which you can change."

A version of this article appears in print on 07/22/2014, on page D4 of the New York edition with the headline: Your Back Can't Tell It's Raining.

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