

Exercise each day!

Bed rest and inactivity weakens your muscles and puts more stress on your painful areas. Keep your muscles strong to avoid further weakness and pain.

A trained provider can help you get started in an exercise program that meets your needs. This may be as simple as walking or water exercises.

A gradual increase in daily exercise is the key, sometimes increasing by as little as 1 minute every few days is best!

On days when you are feeling better, don't overdo it. Pace yourself! Doing too much too fast can worsen pain.



Stop smoking, using alcohol and illegal drugs!

These substances can worsen pain even if they seem to help. They may get in the way of your pain medicines, making your pain harder to treat.

They can prevent or delay healing and cause serious health problems.

Ask your health care providers for help to stop using these substances.

Keep your mood in balance.

Pain can affect your feelings, relationships, and finances. Emotional suffering can make your pain and mood worse.

Expressing your feelings verbally or in written form (keeping a diary or journal) may be helpful.

A mental health professional can help you cope with pain, anxiety or depression.

Your health care provider may give you medicines to aid in getting your mood back in balance. Talk with your healthcare provider to work out the best plan for you.

Pain Hotline 1-866-990-HURT



Patient Resources on the Internet

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

American Chronic Pain Association
www.theacpa.org

American Pain Foundation
www.painfoundation.org

American Pain Society
www.ampainsoc.org/people

Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Pain
www.nccam.nih.gov

Opioids911-Safety
www.opioids911.org

PainACTION
www.painaction.com

The Neuropathy Association
www.neuropathy.org



Have hope!

***You can manage your pain
and not let your pain manage you.***



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VCU Medical Center
Virginia Commonwealth University
Every Day, A New Discovery.®

Find Balance In Your Life

Chronic pain is treatable. You can control your pain. Using these techniques in your daily life can help your pain. Get help from your family members and friends. Your healthcare providers can help you get started!



Get regular sleep.

If you sleep during the day, you may have trouble sleeping at night.

Set a regular time to go to bed and a regular time to wake up. Don't change your sleep or wake times by more than 30 minutes.

Sleep aids should only be used for short periods (less than a few days to a week). They disturb your sleep-wake cycle and stay in your body, making you more tired during the day!

Avoid caffeine and smoking before bedtime.

Eat healthy!

Unhealthy foods will add weight, making pain worse by putting stress on joints.

Healthy snacks such as fruit, vegetables, and nuts can provide energy.

High sugar snacks such as candy, cookies, or doughnuts zap energy, making it harder to stay active!

Stretch each day!

Simple stretching and bending increases your flexibility and keeps your muscles, tendons and joints healthier.

Stretch in the morning before you get out of bed. Bend and stretch during the day, using a chair to keep you stable.

Connect with your inner self.

Prayer, meditation or yoga can help keep pain in check.

Self-help media (tapes, CDs, DVDs) can help you get started.

Distraction is a proven and powerful method of pain relief!

Activities you enjoy can help distract you from suffering and keep a balanced perspective on life.

Keep working, even at a reduced schedule. If you don't work, a regular schedule of responsibilities such as volunteering may also offer distraction from your daily battle with pain.

A hobby you enjoy can help keep your mind off pain. Think "outside the box": Roosevelt Grier, a famous football player in the 1960s, was noted for his needlepoint and even wrote a book on knitting for men!

Stay mentally active by reading, keeping up with the news, or engaging in community service.



Consider a support group.

Support groups offer a way to connect with others who suffer with chronic pain.

Check with your local newspaper, hospital or church for support groups.

When you need medicine for pain . . .

Most medicines do not get rid of pain. Make and use a **total plan** to manage your pain.

If you take controlled substances such as opioids, benzodiazepines, or amphetamines for your pain -- ask your healthcare provider about the good and bad effects of long term use.

Many pain medicines have side effects when first started or when taken over a long period of time. Side effects may include drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation and effects on stomach, colon, urinary and sexual functioning.

Be aware of the amount of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) you take in prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Never exceed the recommended doses.

Use these tips to take medicines safely.

Do not drive or perform other complex tasks when starting a medication or changing your dose.

Store your medicines in a locked or secured cabinet in your home to prevent theft or wrongful use.

Never take medicines from others and never give others your medicines. Not only is it not safe, it is against the law!

Do not take opioids with medicines that can make you feel sleepy or tired, including alcohol.

Talk with your health care provider before stopping or changing the dose of your medicines. Abruptly stopping medicines may cause unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.

Be sure to let all your healthcare providers know about all the medicines you are taking (including vitamins and over-the-counter medicines), even if they are not the prescriber.

If you have concerns about addiction, talk to your health care provider.



If you have unused medicines, follow these steps for safe disposal.

Remove any identifying personal or drug information. Never dispose of unused or intact medicine in its original container.

Mix the drug with an undesirable substance (e.g. used cat litter, coffee grounds) and dispose of it in a disposable sealed container (e.g. Ziploc bag).

Never flush unused medication down the toilet or drain unless special instructions are provided.