

Do You Suffer from Chronic Pain?

Managing chronic pain is more than a challenge. It can be an every day battle. Chronic pain can be caused by a variety of chronic conditions or physical injury. Unrelieved pain can aggravate other health problems, cause damage to the body and if not treated properly pain can affect your physical, emotional and social health.

Many people who have pain may look fine on the outside, but on the inside there may be a different story. Describing your pain effectively may help your family, friends and health care team understand and help you. Here are some ways to describe your pain:

- ✚ Use specific, descriptive words. Is your pain dull, throbbing, nagging or stabbing?
- ✚ Talk about what triggers your pain. What makes your pain worse? Movement, stress or time of day?
- ✚ Name activities (at work, home and play) you now avoid because the pain makes them impossible to do.
- ✚ How much exercise are you able to do and what is your range of motion? How far can you walk before you need to rest or sit down?
- ✚ Can you carry things like you used to or does pain stop you from lifting things?
- ✚ Does your pain interrupt your sleep or make it difficult for you to fall asleep?



If you have pain, you know it can stop you in your tracks. Learn how to be your own best advocate as you navigate the road to pain relief. Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind along the way:

- ✚ **Don't be afraid to speak up!** Only you know the extent of your pain and how it affects your quality of life.
- ✚ **Seek treatment early and know your options for relief.** There are a variety of medications and non-medication based therapies available to effectively control pain. Some examples are physical therapy, yoga, meditation, These are typically used in combination with medicine. Ask your health care provider about ways to learn how to relax and cope with pain. Your pain may feel worse if you are stressed, depressed or anxious.





✚ **Set realistic goals with your health care provider.** Focus on the daily activities you most want to get back to doing, such as sleeping, working, exercising, caring for a child, or enjoying sexual relations. Begin with the easiest goals first.

✚ **Tell your providers what prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements you take,** at what dose and how often. Also let him or her know about other personal health habits (e.g., smoking tobacco, alcohol use), which can interfere with pain treatment and increase pain levels.

✚ **Keep a pain journal.** Record the frequency and intensity of your pain. Use descriptive words, such as sharp, crushing, throbbing, shooting or tender. Also, take note of how well your treatment plan is working and what makes your pain worse or better.

✚ **Write down any questions or concerns you have before each appointment.** Write your questions and concerns in a notebook before your appointment. Be sure to tell your provider(s) if there is something you don't understand. Also, let him or her know if your pain is persisting or getting worse in between appointments.



✚ **Identify a pain buddy.** This trusted family member or friend can be your support person, especially on bad pain days. Bring him or her to your medical appointments to help take notes, ask questions and remember what was said.

✚ **Don't overdo it.** Know your limits and find ways to enjoy life. Even small distractions can help.

✚ **Set pain management goals and follow through on them.**

✚ **Know there will be good days and bad days and plan accordingly**

✚ **Find out about support groups and educational programs** in your area or online. For more information regarding pain management please contact:

- The American Pain Foundation at 888-615-PAIN (7246) www.painfoundation.org or
- American Pain Society at 847-375-4715 or online at www.ampainsoc.org
- Health and Healing NY. at 877-620-9999 or online at www.healingchronicpain.org

