

Tips for Reducing Chronic Pain

Pain management is not a quick cure. There are reasons that you are experiencing pain, and those have to be addressed by the proper healthcare professionals. If there was a “magic bullet” you and I both would have heard about it by now. The brain’s response to chronic pain is to develop ways of avoiding pain as much as possible. This can mean good, old-fashioned denial or changes in posture or walking gait or protection against false hopes by creating negative beliefs and self-fulfilling prophecies. As well, there are many substances the body produces to cope with injuries and traumas. These help very much in the short run, but if the body does not stop their production after a while chronic production of these chemicals can contribute to the perpetuation of the pain cycle. After a while, we begin to exhaust brain chemicals that fight pain and depression, adrenal hormones that help us cope with stress and inflammation, thyroid hormones, sex hormones, and other naturally produced messenger molecules that help maintain health. However, once they become exhausted it is so much more difficult to recover from chronic pain.

*****The following tips are brief snippets of advice. These tips are meant to be considered as one part of the chronic pain ordeal that I address in the following PDFs found in this section of my website. I know you might be in great pain. I know it may be difficult to focus and concentrate. Please, however, I ask you to review these PDFs: Adrenal Fatigue, Breathing Pattern Disorder, Chronic Fatigue, Fibromyalgia, and Chronic Pain, Pain Amplification Syndrome, and Tension Myositis Syndrome. As always, obey your physician’s recommendations. If any of the following suggestions run contrary to those of your physician’s, discuss them with him/her and me.**

Together, we can put together a practical plan for you. You can learn whatever you need to learn at whatever pace you choose. I have a 10-point plan for treating chronic pain that can be designed for your needs, your ability, and your choice to move faster or a bit slower.

In no particular order...

1. Drink at least 8 glasses of pure water or herbal, decaffeinated tea per day.

***Note: Dietary recommendations are based on conventional wisdom and good, solid research. The idea is to maintain hydration, electrolyte balance, proper nutrients to reduce inflammation and heal tissue and joints, and help the body produce the chemical messenger molecules that reduce sensitivity to pain and create the motivation and mood to begin to rehab with healthy behaviors.**

1A. This is posted on the website StopPain.org: The Albert Einstein College of Medicine
http://www.healingchronicpain.org/content/introduction/conv_mndbdy.asp

(please copy and paste this website address if you cannot access it by clicking on here)

2. Gradually eliminate all forms of caffeine. Green tea is an acceptable substitute for coffee and caffeinated beverages. Cola drinks and flavored sodas can increase sensitivity to pain.

3. Excessively salted foods can affect the adrenals and increase sensitivity to pain (if you need to have chips and pretzels try to buy low sodium versions that are baked and not fried).
4. Test for food allergies and sensitivities. Undigested fractions of certain foods can deposit in muscles, joints, and the brain, itself. Consequently, there might be swelling and pressure upon nerves and sensitive tissue, brain fog, fatigue, inflammation, and greater sensitivity to pain.
5. Do not skip meals. Eat regularly throughout the day, even if the meals are small.
6. Try to make the evening meal a high-quality vegetarian meal (soy, other legumes, sweet potato, other tubers and root vegetables, vegetables, etc.) as long as you have had sufficient protein throughout the day.
7. Stretch daily: 10 minutes per morning and 10 per evening. If you want recommendations for yoga, qigong, or stretching videotapes, ask.
8. Practice breathing exercises 10 minutes twice each day.
9. Deep sleep is absolutely essential. It promotes growth hormone and its related ability to help repair the body. It gives your body a chance to replenish necessary hormones. It improves your capacity to cope with pain, and it helps provide the energy and state of mind to rehab properly and practice some of the other recommendations listed here. It increases neurotransmitter production. It increases the strength of organs and glands.
10. Autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation, Relaxation Response training, hypnotherapy, any of the various types of energy psychology, proper breathing, clinical hypnotherapy, and visualization have helped millions to master or cope much better with pain. Nothing comes easy. None of these items is magic. However, when they are practiced, you may find relief you may not have experienced in months or years.
11. If possible, and if not discouraged by your doctors, walk at a comfortable pace. Build up to 30 minutes or more per day. Tai Chi and Qi Gong (often spelled Chi Kung or Chi Gung) are gentle means of circulating blood, improving joint flexibility, improving breathing and oxygenation of your body, gaining strength, and improving mood.
12. Cut back on dairy, red meat, chicken, veal, and pork products. In their place, eat omega-3 enriched eggs, omega-3 rich fish like salmon, tuna (packed in water), bluefish, striped bass, herring (packed in water and not pickled) mackerel, sole, flounder, halibut, or cod, soy foods, high quality whey protein.
13. Reduce or eliminate foods containing MSG in all forms. MSG can be found in many foods other than those in a Chinese restaurant. Beware of all packaged and flavored foods. Search the label for any words with "glutamate" including sodium and calcium glutamates. Also avoid sulfites and sulfur dioxide, artificial sweeteners, and artificial colors or flavors. If you need more information about the kinds of foods that often contain any of these substances, please ask for a list.
14. No alcohol in any form.
15. No fried foods.
16. Cook only with olive oil. Do not use vegetable oils.
17. Eliminate or reduce sugar in all forms.
18. Eliminate or reduce pickled foods.
19. Stop smoking.
20. Get 30 minutes of sunlight and fresh air each day.