



Video transcript: taking control of chronic pain

Intro

This is a video about what you can do to help with chronic pain

Before we get too far in, I want to tell you what chronic pain is.

Chronic pain, which should be evaluated by a doctor, is pain that doesn't go away after 3 months.

Did you know that millions of Americans live with chronic pain every day?

And for many, their chronic pain is so severe it holds them back from work or school.

If you or someone you love lives with chronic pain, you're probably wondering if there's anything you can do about it.

Well the answer is – yes, there is!

Many people have found they can lower the severity of their pain enough to get back to the things they want to do.

So, what can you do to help with chronic pain?

You're about to find out!

Main content

Strategy 1: Move your body

Researchers who study pain have found that movement is medicine.

It turns out movement and exercise stimulate your brain to release feel-good chemicals like endorphins.

But, don't let the word "exercise" scare you. You don't necessarily have to get sweaty and out of breath; even gentle active movement helps.

Walking is one of the simplest ways to move your body. Try to walk 3 to 5 times a week, for 30 minutes. Or, if you're not quite ready for that, just try 5 minutes of walking.

Any movement is better than no movement, especially if it has been a long time since you've been active.

Swimming or water exercise classes are a great way to get moving while taking it easy on your muscles and joints.



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Stretching and yoga can help relieve tension and stiffness in your muscles, which just feels great!

And while you're getting active, keep these other tips in mind:

- Avoid sitting still for too long. Stand and stretch at least every 45 minutes.
- Avoid staring down at a smartphone or computer for a long time because this can worsen pain and stiffness. Changing your position and correcting your posture is really healthy for you.

Talk to your doctor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, or chiropractor, about what kinds of exercise are safe for you.

Strategy 2: Make changes to what you eat

Don't panic; you don't have to go on a special diet. Start by adding fruits such as berries, pineapples, and cherries; nuts, such as pecans or walnuts; and veggies like broccoli, tomatoes, and spinach. Try fatty fish, such as salmon or tuna for your main course. And use olive oil when cooking or in salad dressing.

All of those foods help your body reduce inflammation, which is a common cause of chronic pain.

Oh, and one last tip about what you eat: eat less sugar, processed foods – like chips or cookies – and fast food because they can increase inflammation and chronic pain.

Strategy 3: Try to get more sleep.

Many people don't realize how important sleep is to our health and well-being.

But try going to bed 30 minutes or an hour earlier than usual and see if it'll help you feel more rested!

Sleeping 7-9 hours per night, on a regular daily schedule, is best. If you're having trouble sleeping, try to drink less caffeine and alcohol, and turn off electronics like TVs or smartphones an hour before bed, because those things can interfere with your sleep.

Many people with chronic pain end up in a vicious cycle when it comes to sleep:

Your pain makes it hard to sleep, and not getting enough sleep makes your pain worse.

If your pain is disturbing your sleep, talk to your doctor

Strategy 4: Check in on your mental and emotional health.

Our bodies and minds are strongly connected.

Scientists now know that physical pain and emotional pain—such as depression, stress, or trauma—share some of the same pathways in the brain and nervous system.



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Depression makes pain worse, and pain makes your depression worse; it's another vicious cycle!

Treating depression through counseling, medicine, or both, can help with physical pain as well.

So, if you think your mental health adds to your pain, talk to your doctor about it.

Strategy 5: Practice mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness meditation is a way to relax your mind and change how you experience sensations - even pain.

It takes some time to learn, but in one study, people who stuck with meditation lowered the amount of pain medication they needed by three-quarters!

Strategy 6: Connect with people you like.

Research shows that spending time with friends and other people who support you can make a real difference in chronic pain.

These social connections are especially important for people who have emotional or mental health issues that can make their pain worse.

Think about those specific people who make you feel good and healthy. Try taking a walk with a friend a couple times a week!

Strategy 7: Take an active role in your health.

Remember that you are the true expert of your body, your pain, and your experience.

You know what healthy habits make you feel more functional, and you know what makes you feel worse.

Take charge of your own body by embracing this knowledge and sharing it with your doctors.

And there we have it – 7 strategies to help with chronic pain!

If you want to go one step further, consider *becoming an advocate*.

You can help advocate for policy changes like making sure people have a place to buy healthy food and a safe place to walk – which can influence the things people can do to help with chronic pain.

You can talk to your representatives in local government, write letters and call your Congresspeople, and connect with others who also advocate for change.

If you want to learn more visit our website – beyondpainstl.com