

# Pain Management



Science understands a little of how pain works. There are words to describe its effects, yet they can never entirely convey to someone else what you are feeling. Any two people will experience different levels and intensities of pain and react differently to virtually identical injuries. Some become paralyzed. They sit at home, don't go out, becoming more and more alienated and depressed. Others use the, "no pain, no gain" philosophy and do all kinds of things, trying to prove to themselves that they can do it, finally crashing. The key is to find the middle ground and learn to utilize your good strategies and minimize your painful triggers. You have to learn to accept that there are certain activities that will only increase your pain and therefore have to be at least modified and maybe eliminated. You will have to discover how to work around your pain to maximize your ability to live comfortably. Since your pain is entirely your own, medical professionals may never fully understand exactly what you are going through but trust them to recommend pain management strategies.

Pain requires a combination of strategies to help you reduce and cope with your pain, improve daily-living activities and learn to deal with the stresses that pain can cause. Not every strategy will be equally effective for everyone; you need to discover what works for you. Medications are only **ONE** part of that strategy. It is important to keep in mind that they will mask pain and can cause real harm by allowing you to do things that cause damage. While we do not expect you to stop taking medication, especially those prescribed, there are compliments to medication that help people take control of their lives: relaxation, exercise, massage, heat, ice, supports and other devices.

A physical therapist can help you learn to manage your pain by providing ways to modify activities, teaching you how to incorporate rest and energy conservation techniques, showing sleep and relaxation strategies and creating an exercise program for you. You should be able to reduce your pain, increase flexibility and strength and resume some, if not all functional activities. These strategies can achieve dramatic results and, with practice, you will find they become easier and more effective. Do not feel guilty about taking time to make them part of your schedule; taking breaks to rest and relax and sleep better will actually save time in the long run, because when done properly, you will have more energy and less pain to do the things that are important to you; you will also find your recovery time reduced.

How you meet the challenge of pain will determine not only how well you cope with your illness but how much pain you experience during healing. It is a matter of pain management, a gradual process of learning to regain control over your body and thus feel that **you are controlling your pain and not that the pain is controlling you**. Knowledge is power. Learn to wield that power as an active participant of your treatment team.

