

Top Ten Tips for Managing Chronic Pain

1. Understand that chronic pain is different from acute pain

Acute pain is short-term and temporary whereas chronic pain lasts longer than 3 months. Acute pain is a “warning signal” that tells us something is wrong with our body, such as an injury, but this is NOT the case with chronic pain. Therefore, different treatments are recommended for chronic pain and pain medication, lots of rest, and/or massage will not help in the long term.

2. Remain active

Even a short walk each day can help improve your physical condition and boost your confidence that you CAN do things despite your pain. With time you can build on this, and the more activity you do the healthier you will be. The healthier you are the better you will sleep and feel.

3. Pace yourself

By pacing, you can have more control over your pain and minimise fluctuations in your pain. Pacing means to keep activity levels fairly consistent throughout the day and across the week, and taking regular breaks before your pain becomes very strong. Using this tip you can become gradually more active over time.

4. Learn to relax

Relaxation will help you to better manage your pain, stress and tension and it will help you sleep. Whichever relaxation techniques you use, practice is the key.

5. Distract yourself

Each person only has a certain amount of attention. You could choose to focus most of your attention on your pain, but the experience of the pain becomes more intense because you are concentrating on it so much. By deliberately

increasing your focus on something else, your pain focus automatically decreases, which will hopefully result in a more pleasant experience than focussing on your pain.

6. Develop helpful thinking and overcome worry

How you think and respond to your pain will make a significant difference to how you feel. Although you won't always have a choice in determining what goes on around you, you will always have a choice in determining how you think about what goes on around you, and this includes your pain. The more constructive you are able to be when thinking about your pain, the better you will feel and the more likely you are to engage in useful and necessary activities.

7. Sort out your sleep routine

If you are sleeping well, it will be easier to manage your pain. Go to bed only when you're tired, avoid stimulating activities in the bedroom, avoid caffeine and excessive alcohol consumption and get up at the same time every day.

8. Address other issues in your life

In addition to your pain, you may have problems at work or with your partner or family. Use problem solving to sort out other areas that might cause you to feel stressed or worried. If you are depressed or anxious, you can seek professional help.

9. Motivate yourself to make these changes

Managing better with your pain will require you to make some changes to your lifestyle and habits. To keep yourself motivated and working towards your goals, focus on the benefits rather than disadvantages of changing, and remind yourself of the strengths you have that will help you with this process. Rewarding yourself can also be a great motivator.

10. Practice and persevere

All of these skills can be learned, and just like any skill, with practice they become easier and more effective. So stick at it!