

Wellness Corner Connection

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIF

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Pain Can Be A Royal PAIN

Chronic Pain Statistics in U.S.

- ◆ Pain affects more people in the U.S. than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined
- ◆ 55% of all adults have experienced pain in the previous three months.
- ◆ 3 million U.S. adults suffer from daily pain
- ◆ Of those in pain, 27% suffer from lower back pain, 15% from severe headache or migraine pain, and 15% from neck pain
- ◆ Considered a public health problem that costs society upwards of \$650 billion annually in direct medical treatment and lost productivity.

nccih.nih.gov/health/pain



It's probably safe to say that everyone of us has at some point felt pain. It's our bodies way of telling us something is wrong. Everyone's tolerance of pain is unique to that individual. Plus there is acute pain and chronic pain which are very different.

Acute pain typically occurs suddenly and from a specific incidence. It's sharp in quality and usually does not last more than six months or whenever the underlying cause is removed or healed. Some causes of acute pain include:

- Surgery
- Broken bones
- Dental work
- Burns or cuts
- Labor and childbirth



Chronic pain (also known as persistent pain) is different. It usually lasts longer than six months and continues even after the injury or illness causing it has healed or gone away. It can even exist if no past injury or bodily damage occurred. Some conditions include:

- Headache
- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Nerve pain
- Back pain
- Fibromyalgia pain



Such pain can interfere and affect ones level of quality sleep due to muscle tension and inability to relax and get comfortable. It can cause difficulty in movement, a lack of energy and changes in appetite. Emotional effects can also be caused by chronic pain (depression, anger, anxiety, and fear) especially if the cause is unknown and the relief minimal if at all.



25.3 million
American adults
suffer from daily pain



23.4 million
American adults
report a lot of pain

Low Back Pain

80%
of the population will experience LBP at some point in their lives

Typical Causes of lower back pain (LBP)

Majority of LBP is mechanical in nature and associated with normal wear and tear that occurs as people get older.

→ **Sprains & strains** causes most of the acute back pain.

Sprains are caused by overstretching or tearing ligaments. Strains are tears in tendon or muscle. Can be caused by twisting or lifting improperly; lifting something too heavy; overstretching.

1 IN 4
Americans experience LBP at any given time

→ **Disc degeneration**—one of the most common mechanical causes of LBP that can be a normal process of aging but can be prolonged.

→ **Herniated or ruptured discs**—intervertebral discs become compressed and bulge outward or rupture.

→ **Radiculopathy**—a condition by compression, inflammation and/or injury to a spinal nerve root. May occur when spinal stenosis or a herniated or ruptured disc compress on a nerve.

→ **Sciatica** (a form of radiculopathy) caused by compression of the sciatic nerve, a large nerve that travels through the buttocks and down the back of the leg. May experience shock-like or burning in low back along with pain through the buttocks, down one leg and occasionally into the foot. If the nerve gets pinched between the disc and adjacent bone, there could be numbness and muscle weakness in the leg.

→ **Spondylolisthesis**—a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine slips out of place, pinching the nerves exiting the spinal column.

→ **Traumatic injury** from such things as playing sports, car accident, or a fall

#1
Cause of work-related disability in persons under 45 in the US

→ **Spinal stenosis** is a narrowing of the spinal column that puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves. Can cause numbness with walking and over time can lead to leg weakness and sensory loss.

→ **Skeletal irregularities** such as scoliosis (curvature of the spine); lordosis (abnormally accentuated arch in the lower back) and other congenital abnormalities of the spine.

2nd
most common reason reported for missing work

Our lower back is an amazing structure

- Most pain involves the five vertebrae (L1-L5) in the lumbar region
- It supports much of the weight of the upper body
- Intervertebral discs are round, rubbery pads that act like shock absorbers throughout the spine and are between each vertebrae.
- Ligaments hold the vertebrae in place
- Tendons attach the muscles to the spinal column
- 31 pairs of nerves are rooted in the spinal cord which control body movements and transmit signals from the body to the brain.



Risk Factors for developing low back pain

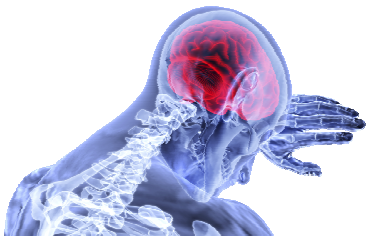
- Age
- Fitness Level
- Pregnancy
- Weight gain
- Genetics
- Occupational risk factors
- Mental Health
- Backpack overload in children

Other Conditions Causing Chronic Pain

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the way your brain processes pain signals.

Symptoms sometimes begin after a physical trauma, surgery, infection or significant psychological stress. In other cases, symptoms gradually accumulate over time with no single triggering event.

Women are more likely to develop fibromyalgia than are men. Many people who have fibromyalgia also have tension headaches, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression.



Inflammatory Diseases of the Joints

such as arthritis, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and gouty arthritis. Even spondylitis, an inflammation of the vertebrae, can cause low back pain. A study from Emory School of Medicine theorized that minor increases in inflammation can even have an increased affect on depression and mood changes. Some studies, particularly with heart patients, have found that those who are depressed have higher inflammation levels within the body.

Itchy skin can be a sign of inflammation.

Diet and weight can both cause inflammation in the stomach and gastrointestinal tract. This can lead to acid reflux, bloating, constipation and diarrhea. Diets rich in fruit, healthy fats like omega-3, nuts, lean proteins and seeds are ideal.

Chronic Pain and Your Brain

When someone is in pain, not only is the nervous system hyper-aroused, but many sections of the brain that typically work to calm us down, are in fight-or-flight mode. It is common for someone in pain to feel physically, emotionally and mentally overwhelmed, stressed and drained.

There are sections of our brain that are structured to amplify sensations/emotions while other parts that are there to keep them quiet, maintaining a system of checks and balances. Emotional stress almost always accompanies physical pain due to the frustration, fears and the difficulties of dealing with constant pain. When a healthy brain is physically altered and becomes a “**pain brain**”, thinking may be difficult adding to ones mental stress. These physical changes have actually been studied using brain-imaging techniques. It clearly shows when these changes occur, emotions, decision making, focusing, reasoning all are altered.

Chronic pain shrinks the gray matter of the brain—responsible for memory and information processing—by as much as 11% a year.

People with chronic pain experience a reduction in the volume of their prefrontal cortex. This section of the brain regulates emotions, personality expression and social behavior. People with chronic pain have excessive activity in this area, causing neurons to die prematurely.

For chronic pain sufferers, the thalamus remains open. Think of the thalamus as the gateway allowing messages to pass between your spinal cord and brain. This gateway stays open when a person has chronic pain, causing the signals to continue amplifying PAIN.

The hippocampus is a part of the brain that helps regulate emotional responses and is associated with spatial processing and the formation of new memories relating to facts and events. People with chronic pain show a decreased volume in this part of the brain, which can lead to increased anxiety as well as learning and memory problems.

Control Chronic Pain by Finding the Calm

Here are a few ways worth trying.

STILL MEDITATION

Meditation calms the brain and decreases anxiety, depression and other destructive feelings that contribute to hyper-arousal and amplify pain.

Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths and slowly exhale. Focus on the present moment. Give your mind a rest. Focus on nothing or something mundane like a sound in the distance, a candle flickering, or your breath.

Meditation can help control fear. Listen to your body. When in pain, notice how fast your heart is beating. How's your breathing? Try a few minutes of meditation to slow your heart rate and breathing while helping to reduce pain..

ACTIVE MEDITATION

Active meditation means meditating while engaging in some type of physical movement. A classic example of active meditation is walking. Focusing on the act of walking, just like focusing on your breath, will help you clear away the distractions, reduce negative thinking and calm your mind. Be mindful of how each body part feels, and how all parts contribute to the movement.

Even without meditation, walking can help improve your psychological and physical states. Consider your outdoor time as therapeutic.



"The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action."
— John Dewey

BREATHING EXERCISES

Your breath is one of the best tools for managing stress and pain; **there is no medicine or surgery more effective at calming chronic aches than proper breathing.** Slow, rhythmic breathing soothes. The physical rhythms of the diaphragm moving up and down and the lungs expanding and contracting, along with the audible sound of air flowing in and out of your nose, can be the calming "music" that gets you through the discomfort and anxiety.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

The goal here is to relax the belly when you inhale. Lie flat, relax your abdomen and slowly inhale, allowing your belly to expand. Then, allow your belly to fall slowly as you exhale. This type of breathing maximizes the amount of oxygen that goes through your bloodstream, interfering with the fight or flight response, allowing you to enter a relaxation response instead.

4-7-8 Breathing

Sit up or lie down, but keep your back straight. Place the tip of your tongue against the back of your upper front teeth. Relax the rest of your tongue. Then keep your tongue in this position and open your mouth, holding it open as you exhale. Listen to the "whooshing" sound your breath makes as it exits.

- Close your mouth and inhale through your nose, quietly, to the count of 4.
- Stop inhaling and hold your breath to the count of 7.
- Now breathe out through your mouth as described, with the tip of your tongue against your teeth, emptying your lungs to the count of 8.
- Count silently and be aware of your breath moving in and out of your nose, throat and lungs. Just a few rounds should be all it takes to achieve a sense of calm.

ART THERAPY

Art therapy can be powerful when dealing with pain. The act of creating is a form of meditation, clearing the mind and quieting the body and mind from reacting to the discomfort. For some, a breakthrough comes from examining what was drawn, then using it as a clue to guide treatment. Anyone can put colors and shapes on paper, and what counts is using art as a "mirror" to see inside yourself and recognize and release hidden emotions that may be contributing to your pain.

The US military recently discovered the power of art therapy for treating PTSD. Creating art helps unlock and release unexpressed emotions, making it easier to process feelings meaningfully. Although you can certainly do art projects on your own, powerful emotional healing can result from working with a trained art therapist, often in a group setting.



FLOTATION THERAPY

Flotation therapy is essentially floating in warm salt water in a large tank. Think about taking an Epsom salt bath to soothe your joints, but in this case the tank is filled with hundreds of pounds of salt making floating completely effortless. The tank is both sound and lightproof allowing you to completely disconnect from the world. A session lasts anywhere between one and three hours.

Flotation therapy is believed to improve a number of ailments including stress and anxiety, joint and muscle pain, back pain, high blood pressure, and insomnia. Even an hour's break from pain and anxiety is worth giving this a try.

YOGA

Yoga is an effective tool for managing stress. The combination of postures, breathing and meditative practice induces parasympathetic relaxation. Yoga alters the stress response for the better on the genetic level. These changes are also linked to the aging process and may be a way of increasing longevity. Find a teacher who can help you get started simply, and work around any limitations.



Can Exercise Help Chronic Pain?

Absolutely...If done correctly, consciously keeping pain level in check, and consistently. But if you are in pain, the last thing you want to think about is exercise. Doctors used to prescribe bed rest for back and other chronic pain. Studies, however, have found that people who exercise and stay flexible can manage pain much better than those who stay sedentary.

Here are some things to keep in mind.



Exercise improves your pain “threshold”.

Regular workouts can boost the production of feel-good endorphins, including dopamine which can help reduce chronic pain.

Exercise can prevent:

- ♥ muscles from weakening
- ♥ Joints from stiffening
- ♥ Extra pounds which can add discomfort to existing pain or make movement more diffi-

Where to start?

Always check with your primary doctor first then seek the advise of an expert (Physical Therapist or Person Trainer) for creating a comprehensive fitness program specifically designed for you. You will want to engage in cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise, stretching (flexibility) and resistance (strengthening) exercises for a well-rounded routine and to get the best overall physical and mental results!



Proven ways exercise can benefit, especially for women:

- ♥ Improved sleep quality
- ♥ Weight control
- ♥ Prevention of bone loss
- ♥ Increased energy level
- ♥ Reduced anxiety and depression
- ♥ Improved body posture
- ♥ Maintenance of range-of-motion in joints
- ♥ Decreased tension
- ♥ Psychological boost



Exercise options:

Walking on a treadmill

Elliptical trainer—especially if walking causes any pain.

Aquatic exercise classes or swimming laps especially great to eliminate joint pain while still giving you the cardio and resistance training needed for heart health and muscle strengthening.

Strength training—if new to this, start by using machines if you have access to a gym. They help support your body properly until you gain more strength. Then progress to free weights.



Be careful with:

High-impact or sports like basketball—jumping, landing, shifting, going in a lot of different directions can put a lot on your joints.

Golf can be a concern. It's a unilateral activity so you're always rotating in the same direction. Tennis might be a better option. But keep in mind you will always be dominate on one side which can cause imbalance in the body enhancing existing pain. Balance it out by incorporating strengthening for the opposite side.

Core strengthening are key in helping to reduce back pain.

Key is to mix it up. Don't do the same thing all the time. And seek expert advise!

Mexican Style Vegetarian Loaf

Meatless Monday Idea

Recipe
Corner

This Mexican style vegetarian loaf includes corn and green chilies, along with cumin, chili powder and cayenne pepper, which means you get a healthy meal with all the great taste of Mexican cooking! With a coating of barbecue sauce, this loaf is sure to be a family favorite. The recipe is guilt-free, checking in at under 200 calories per serving! It also contains *7 grams of fiber and a whopping 10 grams of protein*. Dive into this loaf for dinner and make a sandwich with the leftovers!

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 (15 ounce) can kidney beans, drained well
- 1 (15 ounce) can black beans, drained well
- 1 (4 ounce) can diced green chili peppers, hot or mild, drained
- 1 cup whole kernel corn, unsweetened
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Sea or kosher salt to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 1/4 cups gluten free panko bread crumbs or bread crumbs of your choice
- 1/2 cup shredded 2% cheddar cheese
- 1/3 barbecue sauce, no sugar added (look for one that has honey or molasses) ...check out our recipe for barbecue sauce



Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large skillet add oil, turn to medium-low heat and sauté onions until tender, about 4 minutes. Add kidney beans, black beans, green chili peppers and corn, continue to sauté until beans soften up, about 3 minutes. Add oregano, chili powder, cumin, black pepper, salt and cayenne pepper, stir to combine.
3. Combine in a large mixing bowl bean mixture, bread crumbs and cheese. Lightly spray a loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray, add bean mixture, shape into a loaf. Bake for 30 minutes, add barbecue sauce and bake 1 additional minute. Remove from oven and allow to set 5 minutes. Cut into 8 slices and carefully remove each slice with a spatula.
4. Tip: This loaf is perfect for leftover sandwiches. After being refrigerated overnight, the loaf holds together really well.

Yields: 8 | Serving size: 1/8 of recipe | Calories: 195 | Total Fat: 5 g | Saturated Fats: 2 g | Trans Fats: 0 g | Cholesterol: 7 mg | Sodium: 388 mg | Carbohydrates: 29 g | Dietary fiber: 7 g | Sugars: 3 g | Protein: 10 g | SmartPoints (Freestyle): 3 |

Recipe from : <https://skinnyms.com/mexican-style-vegetarian-loaf/>