

Managing Pain: At-Home Techniques and Tips To Help With Treatment

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Pain is something everyone will experience at some point in their life, if not many times. Pain can make everyday life a chore and limits what we can do physically and socially. Even so, the last thing any of us would want to do is be limited to taking pain medication around the clock, and the thought of taking opioids during America's opioid crisis is daunting and unappealing. If you're looking for ways you can take control of your pain during treatment, consider these easy starting points.

Get enough sleep

Pain may make falling asleep difficult, and a lack of sleep only amplifies pain. Breaking this vicious cycle can prove difficult, especially when taking pain medications can throw off your body's sleep rhythm. Having consistent and enough sleep will boost energy levels and make pain management easier.

Here are some tips to getting better sleep:

- Make a schedule and stick to it. Our body has a built-in alarm clock known, as the circadian rhythm, that tells us when to wake up and when to sleep. But an inconsistent sleep schedule throws off our circadian rhythm and may make us feel tired throughout the day or restless at night.
- Limit food and drink after a certain hour. Eating or drinking before you go to sleep may prevent you from sleeping.
- Adjust your room for comfortable sleep. This can include adjusting room temperature, close curtains and blinds, and sleeping on comfortable bedding.

Start exercising

When you're in pain, moving may seem impossible, let alone exercising. But there are many ways to exercise, and you don't have to jump into an intense workout regimen right away. Instead, an easy and pain-friendly way to start is by walking multiple times per week to pump up your endorphins. Endorphins are neurotransmitters that make us feel good and melt away pain. A 30-minute walk or low-intensity cardio is all it takes to boost them.

Five to six days of low-intensity aerobic exercise is the recommendation, but even just four days of 30- to 45-minute walks can reduce pain.

Relieve your stress

When you are in pain, you may become stressed, and stress can cause more pain. It may lead us to react in ways that amplify pain: Our muscles tense, blood pressure rises and we grow fatigued. In the long run, stress could contribute to other harmful conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Luckily, there is no shortage of techniques that you can use to conquer stress.

- Diaphragm breathing: Stress will change the way we breathe. Our bodies react to stress the same way they react to intense cardio: Our neck and shoulder muscles will tighten, and we will use our chest to breathe. However, by practicing diaphragm breathing, you will feel relaxed as opposed to stress.
- Write it down: Write down your stressors on paper. Do you have stacks upon stacks of work waiting at your work desk? Do you have an important trip you need to prepare for? Getting your thoughts on paper will help you see what the main stressors in your life are and if you can cut any out.
- Take your mind off of it: When you're winding down for the day, try and occupy your time by reading a book or enjoying another relaxing hobby.

Pain can leave you feeling out of control. But with these tips, you can start managing pain yourself. Before making major changes to your lifestyle, discuss your plans with your doctor and clear up any confusion you may have.

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