

Tips for Chronic Pain

(Excerpts from Reader's Digest)

- Heat or ice? Use an ice pack for acute injuries or after injections and procedures, to minimize blood flow and reduce swelling and pain. Use heat to loosen muscles and stiff joints and help you feel more mobile.
- MRIs aren't everything. Studies show that if you perform an MRI on any 100 people, you'll find an abnormality in about 90% of them, even if they're not experiencing any back or neck pain.
- Before you think of Pain meds... The latest research shows that taking opioid pain meds (like Oxycodone) for chronic pain can change the brain, damaging its ability to feel pleasure and leading to a craving for more drugs. A few studies found that long-term use can actually lead to increased back or neck pain.
- Distraction works! If you have mild pain, challenging your brain with your favorite word or puzzle game can help. When you distract your brain, you don't hurt as much. Another activity that helps: watching a funny TV show.
- New back pain? Approximately 90 per cent of low-back pain subsides within 12 weeks without medical intervention.
- If you have chronic pain, consider experimenting with dietary changes. Eliminate dairy for a few weeks, then reintroduce it and see how you feel. Do the same with wheat, red meat, shellfish, citrus, peanuts, caffeine, and alcohol, one at a time. If your pain gets worse when you add back a food, then food allergies may be contributing to your problem.
- Pain meds aren't always the best thing. There are dozens of other effective health treatment options like massage, physical therapy, chiropractic care, yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, pilates, acupuncture, spinal cord stimulators, and behavioral therapy.
- Surgery is not always the best option. In a Consumer Reports survey, just 60 per cent of those who had back surgery were completely or very satisfied with the results.
- Pain is emotional too. You may want to explore psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, meditation, and even self-hypnosis.
- Your pain will improve with the right kind of exercise, and it will probably feel worse if you won't get a good night's sleep.
- Please don't take it personally when we ask you to take a drug test, we are following the rules and recommendations set by the government. There has been research that shows 18 to 41 per cent of patients who take narcotic pain relievers are abusing them, and we want to reduce your risk of this.
- Steroid injections are now a top treatment for back pain, especially for back pain that radiates down the legs. However, there are more holistic options available like PRP or protein rich plasma injections. This uses your own body's cells to help the area heal not just reduce the pain.
- Get out of bed! For every day you're lying there, you lose 1 to 3 per cent of your muscle strength, and then you start to feel stiff simply because you're not moving. Your pain will get better faster if you stay active.