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IN AGING

The Patient education *forum*

Persistent Pain

by the AGS Expert Panel, *The Management of Persistent Pain in Older Persons*

Persistent pain is pain or discomfort that continues for an extended period of time. Some conditions cause pain that may come and go for months or years. In addition to physical discomfort, persistent pain can lead to depression, disability, difficulty with walking and sleep problems. But, there's good news! There are many treatment methods that can reduce pain. Talk to your health care provider about your pain so he or she can provide the help you need to feel better.

Q. *Is persistent pain a natural part of growing old?*

A. No. Even though persistent pain is very common in older people, it is neither normal nor healthy. It should not be ignored or dismissed as “part of getting older.”

Q. *How can I explain my pain to my health care provider?*

A. Using a “Pain Diary” will help you explain your pain to your health care provider. Here is what he or she needs to know:

- Where it hurts;
- How often it hurts;
- How much it hurts;
- What the pain feels like (Does it burn? Is it sharp or dull? Does it ache? Does it feel like pins and needles, or does it “shoot” through a part of your body?);
- What (if anything) makes the pain go away;
- What causes the pain to worsen; and
- What medications or treatments have been tried, how well they have worked, and what side effects (if any) the medication may have caused. ▶