

Dealing with Persistent Pain in Older Adults

“Persistent pain” is pain or discomfort that lasts for a long time, or comes and goes over a period of months or years. Arthritis and other chronic (ongoing) health problems can cause persistent pain. Because many older adults have chronic health problems, persistent pain is common. But persistent pain isn’t a “normal” part of aging and shouldn’t be ignored. If untreated, persistent pain can make it hard to sleep, walk, and carry out daily activities.

Fortunately, there are many effective treatments for persistent pain. You can learn more about persistent pain and work with your healthcare provider to find the treatments that are safe and effective for you. Although you may not get complete relief from all pain, much can be done to control or manage most persistent pain problems.

Here are 10 tips from the experts at Healthinaging.org to help you manage your persistent pain:

1. KEEP A DAILY PAIN DIARY.

A pain diary will help keep track of your pain, its impact on your life and how you respond to treatment. A pain diary is very important when starting or adding a new pain medication. It may take some time for you and your healthcare provider to find the best dosages and combinations for your condition. A pain diary is available on Healthinaging.org if you [click this link](http://www.healthinaging.org/files/documents/DailyPainDiary.pdf) or at: <http://www.healthinaging.org/files/documents/DailyPainDiary.pdf>.

2. USE A PAIN SCALE TO RATE THE SEVERITY OF YOUR PAIN.

A pain scale helps measure how bad your pain is and helps communicate your individual experience to your health care provider. This will help your healthcare provider determine the most effective treatment for your pain. A pain scale is included in the pain diary link above.

3. MAKE SURE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IS AWARE OF OTHER ISSUES YOU MAY HAVE.

This includes other illnesses, chronic conditions, allergies, or surgery that you’ve had. A complete history is crucial in order to avoid possible drug-disease interactions, particularly if you’ve had kidney or liver disease in the past.

4. USE A COMBINATION OF TREATMENTS.

Medications for pain work best when combined with other non-medication treatments. Stress-reduction techniques, exercise, and psychological or social programs can help you deal with pain. Support groups may also help you cope with persistent pain. Ask your healthcare provider for referrals in your community. Your healthcare provider may also refer you to a special pain management center. Some persistent pain problems are very complex and require a team of specialists to diagnose and manage them.

5. KEEP A MEDICATION DIARY.

Make a list of every prescription medication and/or over-the-counter drug or health product that you take. This should include “natural” (herbal or homeopathic) medicines, with their dosages. Have your list handy when you visit your healthcare provider or pharmacist. Tell your healthcare provider if you’ve skipped some doses or stopped taking any medicines. Keep the list in your wallet or purse so it’s available in an emergency. A medication diary is available on Healthinaging.org if you [click this link](#).

6. REPORT YOUR RESPONSE TO TREATMENT AND CHANGES IN YOUR PAIN.

You should tell your health care provider if you have sudden increases in pain or a change in the feeling or location of the pain. Your pain treatment plan may need to be changed.

7. BE SURE TO REPORT ANY SIDE EFFECTS TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.

You should tell your healthcare provider even if you think it is a minor side effect. You should also tell him or her how long the side effect lasted, how severe, and what medications you were taking at the time.

8. TAKE CARE OF YOUR BOWEL FUNCTION WHILE TAKING OPIOID PAIN MEDICINE.

Opioid medications can cause constipation. Fresh fruits, vegetables, and other forms of fiber will help prevent this. If needed, stool softener and stimulant laxatives can be used.

9. USE ONLY ONE PHARMACY FOR ALL YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS.

The pharmacy will have a complete record of all of your prescriptions. This way, the pharmacist can alert you or your healthcare provider to possible interactions.

10. IDEAL PAIN CONTROL REQUIRES REGULAR CHECK-UPS.

Schedule a follow-up appointment before you leave your healthcare provider’s office.

Remember, you do not have to live with untreated pain.
Your healthcare provider can help you find the best way to manage your pain.



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DISCLAIMER: This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other healthcare provider. Always consult your healthcare provider about your medications, symptoms, and health problems.
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