

Your Chronic Pain Treatment Plan

“Being 35 and getting diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis was pretty scary.”

Scary and painful. Sue Schneeberg says when her arthritis flares up her pain can range from dull to sharp to feeling like she has a bad case of the flu.

“My big thing is my fingers and hands swell. My knees will swell, and my ankles and feet will swell and it's hard to get up and down a lot. I get very stiff in the morning when I first wake up.”

“Most chronic diseases like arthritis need to be managed. And so, the question is what do you need to manage this condition for your lifespan?”

Sue's doctor has her taking a couple of medications, including a shot or injection every 2 weeks, to try to get her arthritis, and the pain from it, under control. She's also found some things she can do on her own to relieve the pain.

“I just try to take some time for myself whether it's even taking an extra-long shower. I want to talk to my doctor next time I see him about starting yoga because yoga can also be good for stretching the joints and keeping them healthy as well.”

Yoga has been a good part of Cee Cee Ceman's pain management plan. She suffers from fibromyalgia, and when it flares up, her muscles and bones will ache all over.

“What I do is called restorative yoga, which is maybe just five poses in an hour.”

There is no specific medicine to treat fibromyalgia, so Cee Cee uses a holistic approach, a combination of simple exercise, eating a lot of fish and vegetables, even drinking lemon water or detox tea. Her healthy lifestyle, she says, relieves her stress, and her pain most days.

“You feel the relaxation, your muscles moving, and it's just a real mind powering thing that you are changing your body instead of your body changing you.”

Being in chronic pain can lead to depression or trouble sleeping at times, too.

“It's kind of a cycle so if you are in pain, you don't sleep well when you don't sleep well that actually makes your pain worse.”

To help with sleeping, try to get to bed at the same time each night, and don't allow any screens in the bedroom. The blue light from TVs, cell phones or tablets can keep you awake or disrupt deep sleep. If you think you might be depressed, talk to your healthcare provider. Therapy, or even medication may help. Physical, occupational, or behavioral therapy are other possible ways to treat the symptoms of chronic pain.

“Just got to keep trying until you find something that works.”

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With chronic pain, you need to find a treatment plan so you can do the things you want to do. Talk to your healthcare provider. If you are taking prescription opioids to manage your chronic pain, only take the medication as prescribed by your healthcare provider. If you are concerned you may be addicted to opioids, seek help. For more information, visit [hhs.gov/opioids](https://www.hhs.gov/opioids).

“The best thing to do is have a clear treatment plan, know what the treatment goals are, monitor the results.”