

Living with Chronic Pain

Some days are better than others for Cee Cee Ceman, who suffers from fibromyalgia. When she has a flare up, her muscles and bones ache all over.

“It just hits me like a brick in the face that you just all of a sudden you just want to shut down and go to bed. But you can't do that. You got to keep moving as much as you can.”

Exercise, relaxation, and stress-reduction measures, like restorative yoga, can help people who suffer from chronic pain, such as fibromyalgia.

“It's kind of nice because it's a meditation part of it too. So, if I can't necessarily do the moves, I'm not going to beat myself up about it. If I if I used to go like this with my legs and I can only get that far, at least I'm down there doing it.”

Cee Cee prefers lifestyle changes to taking pain medication to deal with her chronic pain.

“So, I have to find things to do like just knitting just to keep my mind busy. Other than just staring at the TV. So, it's a little active that way. And I'll take walks.”

“We encourage them to be as active as they possibly can. One area that we utilize frequently is aquatic therapy which is doing physical therapy and like a warm water pool. “So, water therapy or aquatic therapy is a really good option for our patients.”

Inflammation and swelling often go along with chronic pain. Maintaining a good weight and healthy eating can help with that. Lots of fruits and vegetables, seafood, lean meats are recommended. Watching how much sodium, or salt, you take in, and drinking water, rather than sugary drinks can also keep swelling down.

“There has been some good research on things like an anti-inflammatory diet that can help patients with chronic pain. So, we do focus on some of that as well.”

“I don't want it to own me. I want to take charge. And so, I've read a lot on anti-inflammatory diets. You've got a Ph balance in your body. Drink a lot of lemon water, hot water, and cold water. A lot of the good oils – fish, salmon, black cod is amazing. What I'm putting in my body can make a difference.”

Another tip to help with chronic pain, don't smoke.

“Nicotine can actually make your pain worse. And so, we strongly encourage patients to quit smoking.”

Chronic pain can make it difficult to sleep but being over-tired can worsen your pain. Try getting to bed at the same time each night and getting rid of “screens” in the bedroom. The light from TVs, phones and tablets can interfere with good sleep. Lifestyle changes, such as exercise, stress-reduction techniques and healthy eating can also break that vicious cycle and help get you back to the daily activities you enjoy.

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 prescription opioids, seek help. For more information, visit [hhs.gov/opioids](https://www.hhs.gov/opioids).