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LESS PAIN, MORE GAIN: Trusted websites for people experiencing pain

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Feeling pain is part of being human.

For the most part, pain is an essential signal in helping us recognize an injury or illness and seek treatment if necessary. Most of us will experience some sort of pain in our life – headaches, pain after a neck or shoulder injury, sports injuries or back strains are common pain complaints.

Pain that lasts for a short time and goes away when the body heals is called acute pain. But for some people, pain does not go away even when the tissue is healed.

The acute pain turns into a persistent pain with no obvious reason for it. This pain is then called chronic pain.

It's estimated more people suffer from chronic pain than diabetes, heart condition and cancer all together. Aside from the social strains associated with chronic pain, such as its effects on patients' relationships with family members and co-workers, the economic burden of chronic pain including health-care costs, lost wages and lower productivity is significant.

The annual cost of chronic pain in the United States is estimated to be more than \$100 billion.

What are my treatment options?

Primary health-care providers, such as family physicians and physiotherapists are usually the most visited practitioners after a painful condition or injury.

Medication and other medical and non-medical interventions such as nerve blocks, physiotherapy, massage therapy, acupuncture and exercise therapy are all valuable treatment options for pain.

When a chronic condition causes pain or when acute pain turns into chronic, a referral is usually made to a specialist for a more specific treatment program.

The most successful treatment approach is a multidisciplinary pain program that may include a combination of medicinal and non-medicinal pain treatments, psychotherapy or sometimes surgical interventions. Pain management programs are often offered in hospitals or rehabilitation centers.

Where can I find information for chronic pain?

The impact of chronic pain on patients' quality of life is so significant that patients with chronic pain and their families are constantly in search of information as how to manage pain.

They continuously turn to treating practitioners for answers to their questions. However, an increasing number of patients turn to the Internet for information on pain management or to share their experience. A simple Google search for "pain management" (without quotes) yields more than 53 million hits.

This abundance of information and ease of access emphasizes the importance of being able to locate quality sources on the web. Many information sites on the Internet are created by drug companies or suppliers offering a cure for pain.

I'm including a few web addresses for reliable information resources or advocacy groups on chronic pain for patients:

- Canadian Pain Society
- Canadian Pain Coalition
- International Association for the Study of Pain
- Hospital for Sick Children
- Action Ontario's Living Well with Chronic pain Condition
- The National Pain Foundation
- Against Pain, a French language site for information of pain:

Information site on headaches

www.headache-help.org/  
Resource for youth and their families dealing with pain

Public Health Agency of Canada  
The National Pain Foundation/ Chronic pain

Although all of these sites provide reliable information related to pain, your family physician is the most valuable source to discuss your condition or information gained from above sources and seek appropriate referrals.

Note:

This information shouldn't be used as a substitute for necessary consultations with a qualified health care professional. Always consult a medically trained professional with questions and concerns you have regarding your medical condition.

Gita Mikal is the founder of Pain Management & Fibromyalgia Centre and Physiotherapy at Don Mills. Gita is a practicing physiotherapist with post-graduate training in pain management. She incorporates a variety of therapeutic techniques such as manual therapy, acupuncture and pain education in her treatments. Visit www.physioatdonmills.com, or call 416-444-4800.

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