

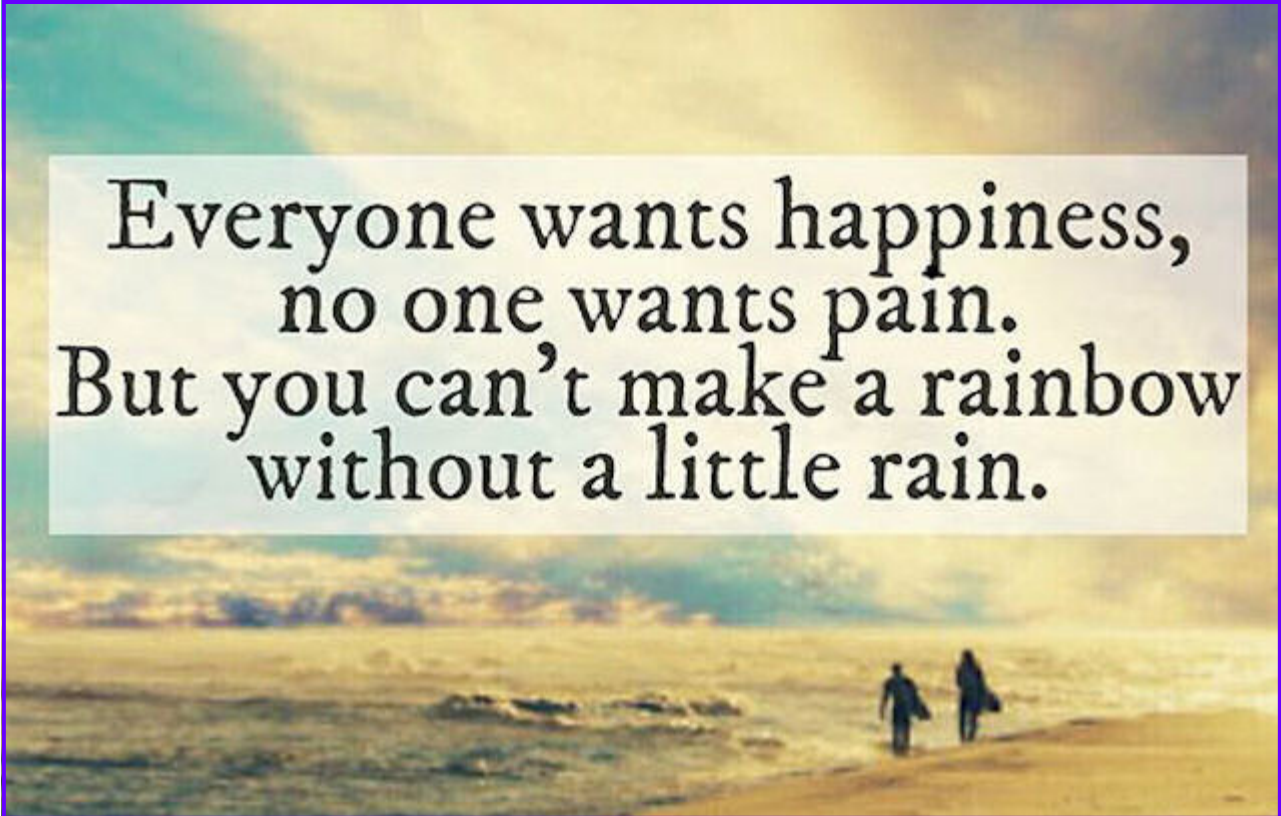
Targeting Wellness Newsletter

September 2021

Good News for Good Health!

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIFs

QUOTES FOR THE MONTH




Everyone wants happiness,
no one wants pain.
But you can't make a rainbow
without a little rain.

A photograph of a beach at sunset or sunrise. Two people are walking away from the camera on the sand. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue.

In this issue:

1. A Royal Pain: Chronic and Acute
2. Typical Causes of Lower Back Pain (LBP)
3. Chronic Pain and Your Brain
4. Can Exercise Help Chronic Pain?
5. Nutrition Bites: Is your diet causing chronic pain?
6. Recipe Corner: 10-minute Creamy Bean & Aubergine Casserole



Some people think that to be strong is to never feel pain. Truth is, the strongest people are the ones who feel it, understand it and grow through it.

A photograph of a person sitting on a bench or ledge, looking out at a sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The person is silhouetted against the bright light.

A ROYAL PAIN!

Chronic Pain Statistics in U.S.

- ◆ Pain affects more people in the U.S. than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined.
- ◆ 55% of all adults have experienced pain in the previous three months.
- ◆ 3 million U.S. adults suffer from daily pain.
- ◆ Of those in pain, 27% suffer from lower back pain, 15% from severe headache or migraine pain, and 15% from neck pain.
- ◆ Considered a public health problem that costs society upwards of \$650 billion annually in direct medical treatment and lost productivity.

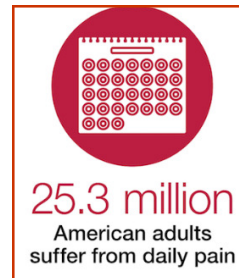
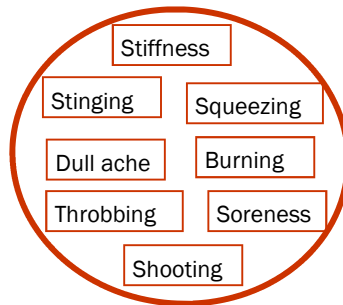
nccih.nih.gov/health/pain

Everyone of us has at some point felt pain. (Some of us may even know someone we might entitle “a royal pain!”). But that’s a topic for another time :-). Here I’m referring to pain in our joints, back, neck limbs, head, etc.

Many of you may be experiencing pain right now. Obviously, pain is important because it’s our bodies way of telling us something is wrong. It gets us to take notice, slow down and take some time to heal. Everyone’s tolerance of pain is unique. Plus pain is different based on whether it is acute or chronic.

Acute pain typically occurs suddenly and from a specific incidence. It’s sharp in quality and usually does not last more than six months or whenever the underlying cause is removed or healed. Some causes of acute pain include:

- Surgery
- Dental work
- Burns or cuts
- Broken bones
- Labor and childbirth

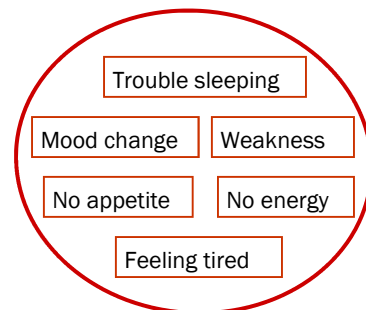


Chronic pain (also known as persistent pain) is different. It usually lasts longer than six months and continues even after the injury or illness causing it has healed or gone away. It can even exist if no past injury or bodily damage occurred. Some conditions include:

- Headache
- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Nerve pain
- Back pain
- Fibromyalgia pain



Such pain can interfere and affect ones level of quality sleep due to muscle tension and inability to relax and get comfortable. It can cause difficulty in movement, a lack of energy and changes in appetite. Emotional effects can also be caused by chronic pain (depression, anger, anxiety, and fear) especially if the cause is unknown and the relief minimal if at all.



Typical Causes of Lower Back Pain (LBP)

Majority of LBP is mechanical in nature and associated with normal wear and tear that occurs as people get older.

- **Sprains & strains** causes most of the acute back pain. Sprains are caused by overstretching or tearing ligaments. Strains are tears in tendon or muscle. Can be caused by twisting or lifting improperly; lifting something too heavy; overstretching.
- **Disc degeneration**—one of the most common mechanical causes of LBP that can be a normal process of aging but can be prolonged.
- **Herniated or ruptured discs**—intervertebral discs become compressed and bulge outward or rupture.
- **Radiculopathy**—a condition by compression, inflammation and/or injury to a spinal nerve root. May occur when spinal stenosis or a herniated or ruptured disc compress on a nerve.
- **Sciatica** (a form of radiculopathy) caused by compression of the sciatic nerve, a large nerve that travels through the buttocks and down the back of the leg. May experience shock-like or burning in low back along with pain through the buttocks, down one leg and occasionally into the foot. If the nerve gets pinched between the disc and adjacent bone, there could be numbness and muscle weakness in the leg.
- **Spondylolisthesis**—a condition in which a vertebra of the lower spine slips out of place, pinching the nerves exiting the spinal column.
- **Traumatic injury** from such things as playing sports, car accident, or a fall
- **Spinal stenosis** is a narrowing of the spinal column that puts pressure on the spinal cord and nerves. Can cause numbness with walking and over time can lead to leg weakness and sensory loss.
- **Skeletal irregularities** such as scoliosis (curvature of the spine); lordosis (abnormally accentuated arch in the lower back) and other congenital abnormalities of the spine.

1 IN 4
Americans experience
LBP at any given time

80%
of the population will
experience LBP at some
point in their lives

#1
Cause of work-related
disability in persons
under 45 in the US

2nd
most common
reason reported
for missing work

Our lower back is an amazing structure

- Most pain involves the five vertebrae (L1-L5) in the lumbar region
- It supports much of the weight of the upper body
- Intervertebral discs are round, rubbery pads that act like shock absorbers throughout the spine and are between each vertebrae.
- Ligaments hold the vertebrae in place
- Tendons attach the muscles to the spinal column
- 31 pairs of nerves are rooted in the spinal cord which control body movements and transmit signals from the body to the brain.



Risk Factors for developing LBP

- Age
- Fitness Level
- Pregnancy
- Weight gain
- Genetics
- Occupational risk factors
- Mental Health
- Backpack overload in children

Chronic Pain and Your Brain

When someone is in pain, not only is the nervous system hyper-aroused, but many sections of the brain that typically work to calm us down, are in fight-or-flight mode. It is common for someone in pain to feel physically, emotionally and mentally overwhelmed, stressed and drained.

There are sections of our brain that are structured to amplify sensations/emotions while other parts that are there to keep them quiet, maintaining a system of checks and balances. Emotional stress almost always accompanies physical pain due to the frustration, fears and the difficulties of dealing with constant pain. When a healthy brain is physically altered and becomes a “**pain brain**”, thinking may be difficult adding to one's mental stress. These physical changes have actually been studied using brain-imaging techniques. It clearly shows when these changes occur, emotions, decision making, focusing, reasoning all are altered.

Chronic pain shrinks the gray matter of the brain—responsible for memory and information processing—by as much as 11% a year.

People with chronic pain experience a reduction in the volume of their prefrontal cortex. This section of the brain regulates emotions, personality expression and social behavior. People with chronic pain have excessive activity in this area, causing neurons to die prematurely.

For chronic pain sufferers, the thalamus remains open. Think of the thalamus as the gateway allowing messages to pass between your spinal cord and brain. This gateway stays open when a person has chronic pain, causing the signals to continue amplifying PAIN.

The hippocampus is a part of the brain that helps regulate emotional responses and is associated with spatial processing and the formation of new memories relating to facts and events. People with chronic pain show a decreased volume in this part of the brain, which can lead to increased anxiety as well as learning and memory problems.

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the way your brain processes pain signals.

Symptoms sometimes begin after a physical trauma, surgery, infection or significant psychological stress. In other cases, symptoms gradually accumulate over time with no single triggering event.

Women are more likely to develop fibromyalgia than are men. Many people who have fibromyalgia also have tension headaches, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression.

Inflammatory Diseases of the Joints such as arthritis, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and gouty arthritis. Even spondylitis, an inflammation of the vertebrae, can cause low back pain. A study from Emory School of Medicine theorized that minor increases in inflammation can even have an increased affect on depression and mood changes. Some studies, particularly with heart patients, have found that those who are depressed have higher inflammation levels within the body.

Itchy skin can be a sign of inflammation.

Diet and weight can both cause inflammation in the stomach and gastrointestinal tract. This can lead to acid reflux, bloating, constipation and diarrhea. Diets rich in fruit, healthy fats like omega-3, nuts, lean proteins and seeds are ideal.

Can Exercise Help Chronic Pain?

Absolutely...If done correctly, consciously keeping pain level in check, and consistently. But if you are in pain, the last thing you probably want to think about is exercise. Doctors used to prescribe bed rest for back and other chronic pain. Studies, however, have found that people who exercise and stay flexible can manage pain much better than those who stay sedentary.

Here are some things to keep in mind:



Exercise improves your pain “threshold”.

Regular workouts can boost the production of feel-good endorphins, including dopamine which can help reduce chronic pain.

Where to start?

Always check with your primary doctor first then seek the advice of an expert (Physical Therapist or Personal Trainer) for creating a comprehensive fitness program specifically designed for you. You will want to engage in cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise, stretching (flexibility) and resistance (strengthening) exercises for a well-rounded routine and to get the best overall physical and mental results!



Exercise options:

- ♥ Walking on a treadmill
- ♥ Elliptical trainer—especially if walking causes any pain.
- ♥ Aquatic exercise classes or swimming laps especially great to eliminate joint pain while still giving you the cardio and resistance training needed for heart health and muscle strengthening.
- ♥ Strength training—if new to this, start by using machines if you have access to a gym. This will help assure you are keeping your body in good alignment during the movement. They help support your body properly until you gain more strength. Then progress to free weights.



Paininjuryrelief.com

Exercise can prevent:

- ♥ Muscles from weakening
- ♥ Joints from stiffening
- ♥ Keep extra pounds off—being overweight can add discomfort to existing pain or make movement more difficult.



Proven ways exercise can benefit, especially for women:

- ♥ Improved sleep quality
- ♥ Weight control
- ♥ Prevention of bone loss
- ♥ Increased energy level
- ♥ Reduced anxiety and depression
- ♥ Improved body posture
- ♥ Maintenance of range-of-motion in joints

**WATER
AEROBICS**

Be careful with:

High-impact or sports like basketball—jumping, landing, shifting, going in a lot of different directions can put a lot on your joints.

Golf can be a concern. It's a unilateral activity so you're always rotating in the same direction. Tennis might be a better option. But keep in mind you will always be dominated on one side which can cause imbalance in the body enhancing existing pain. Balance it out by incorporating strengthening for the opposite side.

Core strengthening is key in helping to reduce back pain.

The key is to mix it up. Don't do the same thing all the time. And seek expert advice!





"A lot of chronic pain is the result of chronic inflammation, and the evidence is quite strong that your diet can contribute to increased systemic inflammation," says Dr. Fred Tabung, a visiting researcher with the Department of Nutrition at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

"But your diet is also one of the best ways to reduce it."

Your immune system is activated when anything foreign enters the body or when you have an injury. Your body sends marching orders to your immune system to quickly send white blood cells to that affected area to immediately start repairing the site or fighting off the foreign substance to protect your health.

But when inflammation persists day after day, even when the foreign invader is no longer a threat, inflammation now becomes your body's enemy. That's when inflammation can start to damage healthy cells and organs and cause constant pain in muscles, tissues and joints. Chronic inflammation can also increase your risk of developing diseases such as cancer, heart disease diabetes, arthritis, depression, and even Alzheimer's.

One of the most powerful tools against inflammation is not found in the pharmacy but rather from the grocery store. Your diet can either support your immune system by allowing it to turn on and off as it needs to or it can alter it so it acts abnormally contributing to persistent low-grade inflammation. (Harvard, Dr. Tabung)

Want to start eating to help reduce chronic pain? Before making any dramatic changes, consult your doctor to be sure to tailor your new eating approach to meet your specific bodily demands, allergies, sensitivities and needs. When you get the thumbs up to move forward, start by incorporating more whole plant-based foods. **Here is a list to jumpstart you:**

- ◆ **Red Grapes**—great source of vitamin A and K, choline, potassium and is rich in resveratrol (a compound that blocks the enzymes that contribute to tissue degeneration)
- ◆ **Ginger**—a University of Miami study showed where 2/3 of the patients who took a ginger extract had less knee pain.
- ◆ **Turmeric**—curcumin gives this spice its rich yellowish color and powerful antioxidant known to help fight inflammation.
- ◆ **Soy**— fights pain with isoflavones which are plant "hormones with anti-inflammatory properties.
- ◆ **Whole fruits**—especially all types of berries
- ◆ **Dark green leafy vegetables**
- ◆ **Nuts, legumes and whole grains**

Try to avoid or limit these foods as much as possible:

- ◆ **Refined carbohydrates**, such as white bread, white pasta, and pastries
- ◆ **French fries** and other fried foods
- ◆ **Soda** and other sugar-sweetened beverages (high-fructose corn syrup)
- ◆ **Red meat** (burgers, steaks)
- ◆ **Processed meat** (hot dogs, sausage, bacon, deli meats)
- ◆ **Margarine**, shortening, and lard

Sources: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/can-diet-heal-chronic-pain>
<https://www.onegreenplanet.org/natural-health/relationship-between-chronic-pain-inflammation-plant-based-foods/>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/foods-that-fight-inflammation>

Studies show that the body's immune system reacts to an unhealthy diet much the same as it would respond to a bacterial infection.

The Standard American Diet generally results in deficiencies in various micronutrients, vital for maintaining a strong immune system.

"The strongest scientific evidence suggests foods rich in antioxidants known as polyphenols can have an anti-inflammatory effect that helps soothe and prevent painful flare-ups."





10-Minute Creamy Bean and Aubergine Casserole

I know that preparing dinner after a busy day at work can be tough unless you have planned in advance. For those unplanned weeknights, check out this recipe. You can have this creamy bean casserole ready in just 10 minutes! Have these ingredients on hand so preparing this after work will yield a quick and super easy dinner! I hope you will give this flavor packed dish a try one night this month for a hearty, healthy and completely plant-based meal! What a great option for a Meatless Monday or if you are trying to add more protein packed and plant-strong meals to your diet.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 1 Aubergine (Eggplant)
- ◆ 1 15oz can Cannellini Beans
- ◆ 1 15oz can Chickpeas (drained and rinsed)
- ◆ 1 Teaspoon dried Chili Powder
- ◆ 1.5 Teaspoons Smoked Paprika
- ◆ 1 Tablespoon Tomato Paste
- ◆ 2 Cans Chopped Tomatoes
- ◆ 1 Tablespoon Tahini (soybean paste)*
- ◆ Salt and Pepper to taste

Steps:

Chop the eggplant into cubes about 1/4 inch in diameter. Sauté in a large frying pan over a medium heat with a little olive oil (options: water or wine) for a few minutes until it starts to turn golden brown. Add the beans and the spices and mix so everything is evenly coated.

Add the tomato paste, chopped tomatoes and tahini, stir and simmer for 5-7 minutes until everything is completely heated through. Taste and season with salt and pepper. Serve with rice or baked potatoes and top with some freshly chopped parsley.

Note: Can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 1 week or can be frozen for up to 3 months.

If you don't have tahini, you might be able to try almond butter or another nut butter that is mild in flavor.

Recipe from: <http://laurencariscooks.com/>



Debby Schiffer, Targeting Wellness, LLC
Wellness Director for
BURLCO & TRICO JIF
E-mail: debby_schiffer@targetingwellness.com
Office: 856-322-1220 Cell: 856-520-9908



There are two types of pain:

One that hurts you and the other that changes you.