

September: Pain Awareness Month

Speak Up

Become a Partner in Your Health Care

Many people go to the doctor ready to just listen and let the doctor take the lead. But the best patient-doctor relationships are partnerships. You and your doctor can work together as a team that includes nurses, physician assistants, and other health care providers to address your medical problems.

Your first step is to find a main doctor (your primary doctor or primary care doctor) that you feel comfortable talking to. Your doctor needs to understand your health concerns and problems. He or she will help you make medical decisions that suit your values and daily habits, and will keep in touch with any other specialists you may need. Make a list in advance of the things you want to discuss. Do you have a new symptom? Are you concerned about how a treatment is affecting your daily life? If you have more than a few items to discuss, put them in order with the most important ones first.

Good communication is key to good health care. Tell your doctor if you have vision or hearing problems so he or she can accommodate you. Some doctors suggest you put all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies or supplements in a bag and bring them with you. You should at least bring a complete list of everything you take. A recent survey found that nearly two-thirds of older Americans use some form of complementary and alternative medicine such as herbal supplements, meditation, homeopathy and acupuncture. Less than one-third of them, however, discuss these practices with their doctors. This news is a cause for concern because your doctor needs to have a full picture of everything you're doing to manage your health. During your visit, make sure to ask questions if anything is unclear to you. Bring up any problems or concerns you might have, whether or not the doctor asks about them. Ask about different treatment options. And don't hesitate to tell the doctor if you have concerns about a particular treatment or change in your daily life. You might also consider bringing a family member or close friend to your appointment with you. Let him or her know in advance what you want from your visit. Your companion can remind you what you planned to discuss with the doctor if you forget, or take notes for you and help you remember what the doctor said.

Take an active role in your own health care. Do everything you can to get the best care possible.

Source: *NIH News in Health*

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http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2007/May/docs/01features_02.htm

Help Your Doctor Treat Your Pain

Doctors can prescribe several different medications and treatments for pain relief. To help them figure out how best to help you manage your pain, be prepared to talk about the following (a family member or caregiver can help someone with a communication or thinking impairment):

- **Pain.** Describe the pain-when it started, how long it lasts and whether it's worse during certain times of the day or night.
- **Location.** Show exactly where the pain is on your body or on a drawing of a body.
- **Intensity or severity.** How bad is the pain?
- **Other factors.** What, if anything, increases or decreases the pain?
- **Personal response to pain.** Fear, confusion or hopelessness about the causes of pain can affect how you respond to and describe pain. Don't be shy talking about things that are bothering you. Let your doctor know what you're going through.
- **Goals for pain control.** How much pain are you willing to put up with?
- **Other signs of pain.** Family, friends and caregivers may note behaviors that signal pain, too.

Source: *NIH News in Health*

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http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2006/June/docs/01features_01.htm

Chronic Pain - Resources

The following organizations are great resources for information on pain, treatment options, personal stories from pain sufferers, advocacy opportunities, support groups and other pain subtopics:

- American Chronic Pain Association, Inc. - www.theacpa.org
- American Pain Society - www.ampainsoc.org
- American Pain Foundation - <http://www.painfoundation.org>
- National Pain Foundation - <http://www.painconnection.org>
- Arthritis Foundation Pain Center - http://www.arthritis.org/conditions/pain_center/default.asp
- The Mayday Pain Project - <http://www.painandhealth.org/>
- National Cancer Institute - Understanding Cancer Pain <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancerinfo/understanding-cancer-pain>
- Pain Treatment Topics - <http://pain-topics.org/>
- PainSafe: Safety and Access to Everyone - <http://www.painfoundation.org/painsafe/>
- Let's Talk Pain - <http://www.letstalkpain.org/>
- Making Sense of Pain Relief™ - <http://www.makingsenseofpainrelief.org/>
- The Pain Connection - <http://pain-connection.org/>

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Safely Managing Chronic Pain

Helping Americans be as healthy and active as possible is a goal shared by all health professionals. But assisting people in managing chronic pain is tough. Strong medicines that relieve the pain can also create new problems and must be used with great care. Those who prescribe these medicines, and those who use them, must learn to do so safely and effectively. Sometimes, non-drug therapies, such as massage, acupuncture, or exercise, can help, as well.

The Two Faces of Pain: Acute and Chronic

What is pain? The International Association for the Study of Pain describes it as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience.” There are two basic types of pain, and they are very different.

Acute pain, for the most part, has a physical cause, such as disease, inflammation, or injury to tissues. This type of pain generally comes on quickly, for example, after trauma or surgery, and may be accompanied by anxiety or emotional distress. Acute pain resolves when its cause is treated and healing occurs.

Chronic pain lasts longer than acute, generally over three months. It may start with an injury or other cause, but it persists even after healing has occurred. Chronic pain is widely believed to be a disease, with known changes in the nerves that get worse with time. Due to its persistence, it can cause major problems in every aspect of a person’s life, and is frequently resistant to many medical treatments. A person may even have two or more coexisting chronic pain conditions. Among the most common pain challenges for Americans are headaches, low back pain, arthritis pain, cancer pain, and nerve and muscle pain.

Fast Facts

- More than 76 million people in the United States live with chronic pain, but surveys show that almost half of them receive no treatment.
- The annual economic cost of chronic pain in the U.S. is estimated to be \$100 billion, including healthcare expenses, lost income, and lost productivity at work and at home.
- Research shows that almost 60 percent of older adults with pain have had it for more than a year.

Source: *NIH News in Health*
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National Institutes of Health

Pain Community News

Did you know that there is a Quarterly Newsletter developed by The American Pain Foundation devoted entirely to the topic of Pain?

Pain Community News is a **free** newsletter which the reader can read online as well as download. The reader can find useful information on the latest pain treatments, a Facts vs. Fiction Quiz on Pain, articles on how to treat pain, a Fast Facts area, and other useful ways to manage your pain and become more involved in managing your condition.

Visit the website below to learn about The American Pain Foundation and read the newsletter devoted to those suffering from pain.

Source: <http://www.painfoundation.org/>

Healthy Recipe: Creamy Cucumber Dip with Pita Wedges

Ingredients:

2 small cucumbers
¼ cup red onion, finely sliced
1 lb. firm tofu
3½ Tbsp. lemon juice
2 garlic cloves, peeled
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. coriander
½ tsp. cumin
pinch cayenne

Instructions:

Peel, seed, and grate the cucumbers. Let stand 10 minutes. In a blender, combine the tofu, lemon juice, garlic, salt, coriander, cumin, and cayenne. Blend until completely smooth. Squeeze the cucumbers to remove excess moisture, then place them in a serving bowl with the red onion. Stir in the tofu mixture. Chill 2 to 3 hours. Cut pita bread into wedges and serve with chilled cucumber dip.

Nutrition Facts:

Yield is 6 servings.

Each serving provides:
Calories: 90
Fat: 2 g
Protein: 7 g
Carbohydrate: 11 g
Sodium: 210 mg
Cholesterol: 0 mg

Source: Healthways, Inc.
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