



## Coping with Chronic Pain: Strategies for Daily Living

If you've recently been diagnosed with a chronic pain condition, you've probably been suffering for a while already. Pain must last three to six months before [being diagnosed](#) as chronic, and most sufferers experience pain for some time before seeking treatment. Nonetheless, learning that your pain is here to stay is a shocking moment. You may feel denial about your diagnosis, anger at not being able to do everything you once could, and grief over the loss of the future you had planned. But while chronic pain may change your life, it doesn't end it. Rather than resigning yourself to your fate, this is the time to confront pain head-on.

### Living With Pain

Pain affects daily life, but it shouldn't rule it. By taking charge of the things you can control, you can minimize your pain and improve your quality of life.

- **Be proactive about health care.** You're the expert on your pain, and doctors only have what information you give them. Be an [active participant](#) in your treatment by asking questions and setting goals with your doctor. Your doctor can explain reasons behind treatments, recommend lifestyle changes, and change things up when something isn't working — but only if you communicate.
- **Adapt your home.** Changes around the house can make routine tasks more pain-free. Improving home organization, purchasing supportive furniture, and choosing ergonomic home hardware and tools makes daily life more convenient and comfortable. If you're having trouble identifying specific pain triggers, try keeping a [pain journal](#). It's also a

good idea to set up a quiet area where you can relax when pain becomes overwhelming. According to [Redfin](#), “Your home is your safe place and most likely the place you spend most of your time. A baseline of good physical health will create the optimal environment for happiness. If your living space is safe, comfortable, and positive, you will be empowered to pursue whatever brings you joy.”

- **Adapt your workspace.** Chronic pain affects focus, energy, and motivation at work. But because it’s an invisible disability, getting accommodations can be a challenge, particularly for workers not covered by the ADA. It’s important to advocate for yourself and ask for [reasonable accommodations](#) like an ergonomic workstation, longer breaks, and the ability to work from home.
- **Live a healthful lifestyle.** Your everyday choices have a big impact on your pain levels. [According to](#) PreventingChronicPain.org, poor sleep, diet, and inactivity are “associated with increased fatigue, muscle tension, increased pain sensitivity, mood fluctuations, poor pain self-management, obesity, inflammation, central sensitization, and chronic pain.” By making good choices for your health — even when it’s hard — you can reduce pain and improve your mental and physical health.
- **Build a support network.** Chronic pain is incredibly isolating. Constant pain and the stress that comes with it make it difficult to be present in social interactions, and you may not be able to partake in activities you once enjoyed. At the same time, social support is essential for quality of life. Take advantage of the good days for connecting with family and friends, and turn to chronic pain support groups for support from people who understand. Connect with other sufferers online or find a local support group using the American Chronic Pain Association’s [search tool](#).

## Pain Reduction Strategies

In addition to making lifestyle changes, chronic pain sufferers should arm themselves with strategies to stop mounting pain in its tracks. The best tips and tricks focus on distracting yourself from pain and reducing stress, a major trigger for flare-ups.

- **Perform breathing exercises.** Deep, rhythmic breathing is a form of meditation, and it’s a great way to elicit a relaxation response.
- **Do gentle exercises.** Yoga, tai chi, and stretching distract you from pain, improve your mood, and build strength and mobility.
- **Start a hobby.** Hobbies you can get lost in (and that don’t trigger pain) are ideal distractions from discomfort.

While these tips are effective at reducing pain, they’re not always easy to implement. Chronic pain affects energy, mood, and self-esteem, and can make even simple tasks seem insurmountable. Rather than expecting perfection each and every day, do your best and understand that your “best” may look different from one day to the the next.

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