



No pain. Big gain.

If you live with chronic pain, it probably affects your daily activities. By knowing the best ways to deal with your pain, you can still lead a rich, full life. There are many options and resources available.

Unlike acute pain, which is caused by an injury and disappears once you heal, chronic pain lasts more than three months. It can be a constant condition, or it might come and go for no clear reason. It's common, affecting about 25 percent of adults in the U.S.

Back pain

About 8 percent of all American adults deal with chronic back pain. It's the sixth most expensive medical condition in the U.S., costing more than \$12 billion in direct and indirect costs each year.

To prevent back injury, experts say you should:

- Maintain good posture when standing or sitting.
- Include stretching and strength training in your workout at least two days a week.
- Practice safe lifting techniques. Bend your knees and keep your back straight.
- Maintain a healthy weight through diet and exercise.

Orthopedic pain

Orthopedic medicine relates to the care of the musculoskeletal system, which includes bones, joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons. Conditions that cause chronic orthopedic pain include:

- Arthritis.
- Osteoporosis.
- Past injuries.
- Chronic joint pain.
- Nerve damage.

If you're dealing with chronic orthopedic pain, your doctor can suggest treatment options for you. Your doctor may suggest pain medication or physical therapy. Serious cases might require surgery.

Joint pain

Many people deal with joint pain. It commonly affects the knees, hips, spine, feet or hands. It can stem from things like injury, overuse, age or weight. Chronic conditions can also cause joint pain. They include:

- Osteoarthritis.
- Rheumatoid arthritis.
- Gout.
- Bursitis.

At-home remedies can improve joint pain. These include exercise, over-the-counter pain medications, heating pads or ice packs. Talk to your doctor if chronic joint pain is affecting your daily activities. Your doctor might recommend stronger measures, including physical therapy, steroids or surgery.



Safe opioid use

Opioids are a category of powerful prescription pain relievers, such as oxycodone, fentanyl and tramadol. They are usually safe to treat acute pain when used as prescribed for short periods. For patients with chronic pain, guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* recommend doctors exhaust non-opioid therapies before prescribing opioids. Doctors should prescribe opioids at the lowest possible dosage and only if they expect the benefits to outweigh the risks.

The potential risks of opioids in chronic pain management include:

- **Developing a tolerance.** Patients taking opioids daily for extended periods might find they need increasingly higher doses to lower their pain levels. This is a warning sign that an addiction might be forming.
- **Respiratory depression.** Opioid use can cause slow or shallow breathing.
- **Opioid use disorder.** Moderate to severe opioid use disorder, also known as addiction, is a chronic brain disease caused by repeated opioid use. People with opioid addictions face a much higher risk of death from a drug overdose.
- **Dependence.** People who have become dependent on opioids rely on the drug to feel normal. People who stop taking opioids suddenly or lower the dosage too quickly might face a higher risk of dependence.

Have an in-depth conversation with your doctor about opioids for chronic pain. Make sure you understand how to take your medications safely. Learn about the possible side effects and risks associated with these strong drugs.

Take Back Day

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)* launched its National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. This event encourages people to safely dispose of unneeded prescription medications so they don't fall into the wrong hands. Visit www.dea.gov/takebackday** to find a collection site where you can safely and conveniently drop off your unwanted medications.

Recovery Support Program

When you or a loved one begins the journey to healthier living, you are not alone. Companion Benefit Alternatives (CBA) offers a free, voluntary Recovery Support program for members through care management. CBA is a separate company that manages behavioral health benefits on behalf of BlueChoice HealthPlan.

Recovery is a process. The program supports you through your recovery, one day at a time. We'll help you plan for success and stay focused on your goals for healthy living. You'll work with a specialized behavioral care manager. Because everyone's journey is different, your care manager will work with you to create a custom action plan to help you overcome the challenges of addiction.

If you or someone you love could benefit from this program, please contact CBA at 800-868-1032, ext. 25835.

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the DEA are independent organizations that offer health information you may find helpful.*

***This links to a third-party website. The DEA is solely responsible for the contents and privacy policy on its site.*

