

DEALING WITH PAIN AND DEPRESSION

Increasing advances in medical science are resulting in cures for many serious illnesses that would previously have been fatal. As a result, more people are finding themselves in the recovery stage of illness, which often brings the accompanying challenges of pain and depression.

Many of us are not fully prepared for this somewhat negative aspect of recovery. We look forward to recovery as the end of a difficult journey, when in fact recovery is often a slow and gradual process that requires physical and emotional stamina. It is important to recognize that such challenges are normal and don't usually last forever. Meanwhile there are many strategies you can use to help keep both pain and depression under control.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Understanding the causes of pain and depression is the first step to finding solutions. There are many resources to help you with this – don't feel you have to struggle alone. Here are some great tips to help you get started:

Communicating with doctors

- Be informed. Find out what pain is normal and to be expected.
- Ask how long it is likely to last.
- Ask how to tell when pain is abnormal and might indicate problems.
- Thoroughly discuss the pain medication you are prescribed and any side-effects that could be expected.
- Keep a diary of your pain and share it with your doctor.
- Discuss whether alternative forms of pain management might be beneficial.
- Discuss whether depression is a side-effect of your pain medication.
- Discuss whether anti-depressants might be in order.
- Keep your doctor fully informed of any changes in the pain and depression you experience.

Pain causes and treatment

- Pain broadly falls into two categories: 1) acute pain, which acts as a warning of possible damage to your body and 2) chronic pain, which may result from previous injury, including surgery, or conditions such as cancer, chronic infection, arthritis or nerve damage.
- Different medications are prescribed for different types of pain. Your doctor will recommend the one that is best for you.
- Pain management clinics are becoming increasingly common. These often take a holistic approach - a variety of treatments may be tried or combined to help you better manage your pain.
- Therapies may include acupuncture, herbal medicine, hypnotherapy, healing touch, aromatherapy, relaxation, diet and massage.
- If pain suddenly becomes unexpectedly severe, seek immediate medical help.

Depression causes and treatment

- Suffering pain is in itself cause for depression.
- Loss of previous health, lifestyle and social network is a major contributing cause, resulting in its own form of grief.
- Stresses over inability to work, future finances and the welfare of family caregivers can also be key factors.
- Group support programs can be of great help to both patients and caregivers.
- If health allows it, get dressed every day, resume hobbies and welcome social visits for short periods.
- If your doctor allows it, walk or exercise daily for short periods.
- Follow a balanced, nourishing diet.
- Remember the power of laughter: watch comedies with your spouse, share silly jokes and read the comics!

This article is not intended to replace professional consultation. Please see your doctor for all medical concerns.

For more information on this topic, contact your EAP at:

www.shepellfgi.com

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