

Treatment Options for Pain – Beyond Medications, Surgery and Injections.

Options for Developing a Personal Toolbox of Pain Solutions.

Dr. Pam Squire, Dr. Owen Williamson, Dr. Brenda Lau, Diane Gromala, Ph.D, Neil Pearson, October 2011



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pain Self-Management & Pain Education Courses . . .	p.2
Improving Sleep . . .	p.5
Changing Your Mind – Changing Your Pain . . .	p.5
Mind-Body Medicine for Pain Relief . . .	p.7
Getting Help — Support for People With Pain & Disability . . .	p.8
Exercise & Progressive Activity . . .	p.10
Lifestyle Changes . . .	p.11

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Chronic pain is overwhelming, period.

No matter who you are, everyone with chronic pain feels this way at some point.

This information is about trying to change that. We recommend that you try things ONE SMALL BIT AT A TIME.

Otherwise, it may feel like an insurmountable challenge to try to address everything all at once.

START by looking at this [five minute YouTube video produced in Australia](#) (The Australians have been leading the world in management of chronic pain for years and the three physicians involved in creating this document all trained there!)

However you came to have this pain Lous Heshusius says something that healthcare workers don't always consider. Communities, homes, and workplaces can and do influence people's health decisions and experience. Your experience is happening in a society that isn't ready for you. It will stigmatize you and in many ways can contribute to your disability. Ten years ago obesity was labeled an personal problem and treatment focused solely on controlling what a person ate and how they exercised. Today we understand the important contribution from society - food industry that promotes excessive portions, food outlets that make high calorie, low nutrition choices the most available and communities and work places that make exercise difficult.

People who report feeling the best find empathetic but slightly pushy specialists (this includes your doctor, physio, occupational or exercise therapist, psychologists, etc). Like our top athletes, you need someone who knows how to push you a little bit when you don't really feel like doing anything more . . . This is just like our athletes who have found that physical coaching wasn't enough to do their best – they needed that PLUS psychological coaching, a great diet AND community support. Our athletes had access to great coaching and programs but it wasn't until we as a country really supported our athletes Canada that we "Owned the Podium".

So, you are unlucky to live now when society does more TO you than FOR you. BUT you can help us change that. [Become a member of PainBC](#) (It's free! All we need is your email address and name) and help us convince governments and Health Authorities to support people with pain. Go to the [Canadian Pain Summit webpage](#) and register to make your voice heard. (A petition to the new government will begin right after the next elections- we need your signature!!!)

Everyone who wrote this document believes that you will can have the best life possible when you use BOTH medication and some of the things we talk about in this booklet.

So . . .

Pick ONE area to start with and try something. Didn't help? At all? . . . DON'T GIVE UP !!!

When you feel the time is right, try again or try something new.

People who live well with chronic pain tell us that they did best when they felt like they were equal partners in managing their pain. Most said that in the early days, they relied heavily on medications, surgery and needles, because they were anxious to find a cure for the pain that had started to control and destroy their life. We don't for a minute want to tell you that you should give up on that route BUT if you are doing this and are still struggling here are some things many patients have found helpful. As Pete Moore writes about his pain toolkit,

“Pain self management is about learning new (or using old) skills, trying them out and see what works for you.

Pain is like a fingerprint, so each person may need to have individual skills to suit him or her. Acceptance is not about giving up but recognizing that this is your pain to manage and you need to take more control. Acceptance is also a bit like opening a door – a door that will open to allow you in to lots of self-managing opportunities. The key that you need to open this door is not as large as you think.

All you have to do is to be willing to use it and try and do things differently.”

We hope that each week you and your health care partner can look at one “tool” you would like to work on and using the resources provided in the next few pages, find some help to achieve your goals.

PAIN SELF-MANAGEMENT AND PAIN EDUCATION COURSES

These courses offer information in pain education, coping strategies and support all in one place.

1. [The Chronic Disease Self-Management Programs](#)

In British Columbia go to this [website](#):

- > click on the Community+ top menu item, and choose Self-Management Programs from the drop-down list
 - > click on the pink province shaped button labeled “Schedules” on the top right side of the page and choose the appropriate Health Authority for workshop schedules and the opportunity to volunteer as Leader.
- These are free and consist of six, 90-minute sessions on pain self-management.

2. [The Pain Toolkit](#). This is a great place to get started! It's free and can be downloaded in a few minutes.

(But it is based in the United Kingdom, so it makes reference to links that are there.)

3. **Private pain clinics** often offer pain education sessions. WCB or ICBC or private insurance companies (the ones funding the disability payments) can be contacted for payment options. Some examples of these clinics include: [Orion Health](#)

4. St. Paul Hospital Pain Centre

offers pain education day programs. For more information call 604.682.2344 Ext. 63276. The Centre is located at:

1081 Burrard Street,
2nd Floor Burrard Building
Vancouver, BC
V6Z 1Y6

5. Fraser Health has opened the new Multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Clinic in the Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and Surgery Centre. 604-585-4450. For information on that and other programs CALL General Information at 1-877-935-5669. The [Fraser Health website](#) is hopeless for pain information.

6. On Vancouver Island: go to the [VIHA website](#).

VIHA has 3 pain clinic locations under a regional program in Victoria, Nanaimo and Comox.

The phone number for the Victoria Program is 250-519-1836. The Nanaimo Pain Clinic has a pain education program. Call 1-(250)-739-5978.

7. **The Victoria Pain Clinic** is a separate private clinic that offers individual, customized programs. They focus on non medication solutions for pain. Contact the office at 1-(250)-727-6250 for details.

8. [The BC Arthritis Society](#) sponsors workshops on chronic pain & Fibromyalgia AND on all the types of arthritis and some associated conditions i.e. osteoporosis. Toll free phone 1-(800)-321-1433.

On the [website](#), search under [Fibromyalgia] for newsletters, library resources and forums.

9. **Overcome Pain Live Well Again**. These are presented as archived webcasts to help people understand pain and provide optimistic guidance about pain self-management techniques. The podcasts include video footage of Neil Pearson speaking and copies of his slides. They are available on the [Canadian Pain Coalition \(CPC\) website](#) under archived podcasts.

PAIN EDUCATION WEBSITES

It is important to understand why pain can become chronic, why it doesn't improve with time and why medications or surgery often provide only partial and often temporary relief. We HAVE NOT included resources and websites for specific types of pain as it would make this document a textbook but links for many different kinds of pain (i.e. Fibromyalgia, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, Diabetic Neuropathy) can be found on central websites like www.painexplained.ca (Note that as of Nov 8, 2011, the site is under construction) and others listed in the green "Getting Help" section. These sources of information are perfect for anyone who can't get to a face-to-face workshop.

1. The Canadian Pain Coalition's [Conquering Pain for Canadians booklet](#) and [Conquering Your Pain video](#) offer important information for managing pain effectively.
2. Alberta Health Services has this online [Chronic Pain Lecture Series](#).
3. Watch this BBC documentary on pain entitled "[The Secret World of Pain](#)".
4. [Canadian Institute for the Relief of Pain and Disability](#) have podcasts from the webinar series "[Chronic Pain : The Journey Forward](#)" and offer other BC resources on different types of pain.

BOOKS ON PAIN SELF-MANAGEMENT

1. [Managing Pain Before it Manages You](#) by Margaret Caudill

This is a wellspring of wisdom and practical approaches that can help transform your life as well as your pain. Dr Caudill's enormous wealth of knowledge, extensive clinical experience and compassionate understanding combine to make this the single best book on pain available today.

2. [Pain Management for Older Adults: A Self-help Guide](#) by Thomas and Heather Hadjiistavropoulos.

3. *Fibromyalgia & Chronic Myofascial Pain: A Survival Manual* by D. Starlanyl and M.E. Copeland (New Harbinger Publications, 2001).

4. *The Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue and Life Planner Workbook: Healing Resources for Patients, Family and Friends* by Dawn Hughes (Universal Publishers, 2001).

5. *Yoga for Pain Relief: Simple Practices to Calm Your Mind and Heal Your Chronic Pain* by Kelly McGonigal. New Harbinger Publications Inc, 2009.

6. *Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief: Guided practices for reclaiming your body and your life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

7. *Break Through Pain: A Step-by-Step Mindfulness Meditation Program for Transforming Chronic and Acute Pain* by Shinzen Young. Sounds True Inc., 2007.

8. [Unlearn Your Pain](#). by Dr Howard Schubiner

BOOKS ON PAIN PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

Books for anyone who needs to understand more about the mechanisms of chronic pain.

1. [Painful Yarns](#) by Dr. Lorimer Moseley

This is a compilation of hilarious stories and images intended to help explain the complexity of pain.

These stories, while entertaining, are used as metaphors to explain key aspects of the biology of pain.

Painful Yarns is a perfect pre-read for *Explain Pain*.

2. [Explain Pain](#) by David Butler and Lorrimer Moseley

A humorous and maybe slightly irreverent explanation about chronic pain pathophysiology, Here's a [YouTube video by the authors which discusses the book](#).

3. *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* by Norman Doidge. Penguin Books 2007.

BOOKS ON LIVING WITH PAIN FROM A PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE (These are great books)

1. *The Pain Chronicles* by Melanie Thurnstrom (A U.S. author)

2. *Inside Chronic Pain: An Intimate and Critical Account* by Lous Heshusius. (A Canadian author) Cornell Press 2009.

3. [Pain: The Fifth Vital Sign](#) by Marni Jackson

4. [My Imaginary Illness: A Journey Into Uncertainty and Prejudice in Medical Diagnosis](#) by Chloe Atkins

IMPROVING SLEEP

Chronic pain may interfere with the ability to sleep. Yet many people have terrible sleep habits or have sleep problems that are sometimes overlooked, and those can also interfere with sleep. (Think of sleep apnea - a problem that causes you to briefly stop breathing and maybe also snore because of opioids, restless legs, jerking limbs or have medication that causes insomnia) Because the importance of sleep cannot be stressed enough, we strongly urge you to address any sleep-related issues you may experience.

For more information on how to sleep well, look at the [National Sleep Foundation's webpage](#).

1. A Sleep Diary

To document your sleep so your health care provider can help determine your problem, complete a [sleep diary](#).

2. Everything you ever needed to know to sleep well.

[CBT For Insomnia](#) is an online program recommended by sleep experts at the University of British Columbia (UBC). It costs \$35.00, similar to the cost of 2 weeks of sleeping pills. It is for problems falling asleep and waking during the night/early morning, for individuals who are not, and those who are, using sleeping pills. This program replicates the 5-session cognitive behavioral program (CBT) for insomnia developed and tested at Harvard Medical School. CBT has been shown to be one of the most effective and long-lasting treatments for people who don't sleep well.

3. [Find a sleep lab near you.](#)

If you are trying to stop sleeping pills that are benzodiazepines (like zopiclone/Imovane, clonazepam/Rivotril diazepam/Valium, lorazepam/Ativan), go to this [website](#) and you can purchase the amazing manual for patients and physicians. The manual contains all of the practical advice you and your physician need to help you stop these medications. It is written by Professor Ashton, a world authority on the subject. And it costs less than the cost of one visit with a counselor.

CHANGING YOUR MIND – CHANGING YOUR PAIN

Pain can destroy your life. Many patients feel like pain, like a mad dictator, is controlling their entire life. Even with the best medical advice, the effect chronic pain can have on your life can be devastating. Medications are often initially effective but for reasons not well understood, the effectiveness often wears off

over time, especially with opioid medications.

What patients have taught all of the health care providers who work with pain is that how much an individual suffers from their pain is not always related to how severe the pain is. We don't mean to say that severe pain does not cause suffering. It does. Eric Cassell writes that suffering occurs when there is a threat to the integrity of a person and if the person cannot be made whole again then the suffering will continue. There are many different kinds of integrity (psychological, physical, social, financial, spiritual).

Some times it is easier to change your concept of what you will accept - physically, financially, socially- and look for options to cope with the change, than it is to regain what you had before.

To control the effect pain has on your life you need to first accept it is here for the time being.

We know that people who have spinal cord injuries, for example, have an injury that cannot be fixed.

For the ones who accept their disability, a wheelchair can be a life expanding solution. (ASSUMING that as a community we have provided wheelchair access...back to how CRUCIAL social acceptance of a problem can be)

For those who cannot accept that they will never walk again, using a wheelchair is only a mark of failure.

Sometimes, chronic pain can be just as irreversible as a spinal cord injury.

We are not suggesting that you give up trying to find pain relieving or curing strategies.

But if you only rely ONLY on medications, surgery or injections to manage your pain, you might be missing out.

Psychologists can teach you a lot about how to have a life with chronic pain. See if you can get a referral to a psychologist who has experience and knowledge about pain. Pain programs also have psychologists on staff — if you can get into one of the good ones you are lucky (if you live in BC). Life coaches can also help you if you are feeling stuck. Not everyone can use these strategies, but they have helped many of our patients.

Please try some of this before you say “not for me ”

Remember . . . START with ONE Change . . .

1. **Ask about a referral to a good psychologist.** Your employer may have an employee assistance program you can access for free. Many extended health care plans will cover a referral to a psychologist with a masters or PhD if your physician writes you a referral. Call the [BC Psychological Association](#) (phone number: 604 730 0522), or visit their [website](#). They don't have all the psychologists listed in the Province.

2. [Centre for Clinical Interventions](#). This is a resource centre with many handouts that help people to change the way they think. It also has psychotherapy course material for family physicians and might be helpful for physicians who are interested in running group sessions on coping with pain.

3. The following are a list of some PhD psychologists who have had extensive experience with chronic pain. This IS NOT a comprehensive list and our patients have found many other excellent psychologists to help them. Many extended health plans and WCB will cover referrals for a few brief sessions to help get you started or give you a few refresher points when you need them.

Dr. Elizabeth Bannerman 1-(604)-592-8348 (Surrey and Abbotsford)

Dr. Wesley Buch 1-(604)-592-8348 (Surrey, Abbotsford and Langley)

Dr. Ingrid Federoff 604-506-8112 (Vancouver)

Dr. Owen Garrett (604)-294-4295 (Vancouver)

Dr. Judy Le Page (604)-803-4761 (Richmond and Vancouver)

Dr. Tony Le Page (604)-803-4578 (Vancouver)

Dr. Brian Grady 1-(250)-592-4281 (on Vancouver Island / Gulf Islands)

4. For a list of other Vancouver area counselors and psychologists with an interest in Pain Management, have a look at the

counselors listed at [CounsellingBC](#).

5. **Life Coaching.** We like [Dr Rahul Gupta](#), a family physician who has additional expertise working with patient's with chronic pain and is an ICF certified life coach. Contact him for more information wherever you live at:

6. **Here to Help.** This [site](#) provides comprehensive information on mental health and addiction issues and focuses on providing information that is based on the best research possible.

DOWNLOADABLE INFORMATION

1. **Psychology of Pain** is a blog created by Gary B. Rollman, Professor of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario and the former President of the Canadian Pain Society. This blog contains links to many useful pain resources and discussions on a number of pain issues.

2. **Centre for Clinical Interventions.** This is a resource centre with many handouts that help people to change the way they think. It also has psychotherapy course material for family physicians and might be helpful for physicians who are interested in running group sessions on coping with pain.

3. **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).** Because of the chronic and persistent pain and fatigue, it is easy to get into habits of activity and rest that may not be the best way to deal with the pain and fatigue. [Cognitive Behavioural Therapy \(CBT\)](#) can help to identify if you have unhelpful ways of thinking and acting, and help you make healthy and positive changes that can reduce pain and fatigue. This is a [self-help website](#) for people that feel stuck that offers people strategies for change.

4. **Online CBT from Australia.** [MoodGYM](#) is an innovative, interactive web program designed to prevent depression. It consists of five modules, an interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, downloadable relaxation audio, a workbook and feedback assessment. Since its launch in 2004, MoodGYM has received several IT and health awards, and has over 400 000 registered users worldwide. MoodGYM is provided free of charge to the public.

HELP WITH MOOD

1. **Mental Health Support through the [Bounce Back Program](#)** in British Columbia. It requires a referral by a physician. *Bounce Back: Reclaim Your Health* is a new program designed to help people experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety that may arise from stress or other life circumstances. The BC Ministry of Health Services funds the project. Call 1-(604)-688-3234 or 1-(800)-555-8222 extension 235.

Bounce Back offers two forms of help:

1. The first is a DVD video providing practical tips on managing mood and healthy living.
2. The second is a guided self-help program with telephone support. A 6-minutes preview of the video is on the website.

2. **[Positive Coping with Health Conditions: A Self-Care Workbook](#)** (Dan Bilsker, PhD, RPsych, Joti Samra, PhD, RPsych, Elliot Goldner, MD, FRC(P), MHSc) is a free self-care manual authored by scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to coping with health conditions such as low mood, worry and tensions. This manual is designed for individuals who deal with health conditions, including patients, physicians, psychologists, nurses, rehabilitation professionals and researchers.

MIND-BODY MEDICINE FOR PAIN RELIEF

MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION

I once asked one of my patients if doing meditation made her pain any better. She was a 65-year-old grandmother who had severe pain from spine arthritis. She thought for a moment and then said this:

"Dear, I'm not sure if my pain is any better but I am much better with my pain." (Note from Dr Squire-I think she was actually talking about combining meditation with marijuana but then many things we do have synergy and she did live in Sechelt)

Meditation

Learning meditation is like learning to play an instrument. It takes coaching and practice.

Books and CD's are helpful, but are no replacement for face-to-face teaching. Going to group meditation courses is a great way to get out. Many yoga studios, community recreation centres and libraries offer these kinds of courses.

Search online for local courses and practice! [Mindful Living](#) teaches mindfulness workshops in Vancouver.

Yoga & Tai Chi

Gentle, and restorative yoga practices have been shown effective for helping to decrease pain, improve function and decrease the psychological and social impact of pain. Many centres have designed classes to accommodate people who have limitations. Tai Chi has also been demonstrated to be helpful.

BOOKS AND GUIDED CD'S

When face-to-face learning is not an option.

1. [Pain Speaking](#) by Jackie Gardner-Nix. Jackie is a Canadian physician with a special interest in pain management. These two CDs are a companion to *The Mindfulness Solution to Pain* book. We really like them.
2. [Dissolving Pain](#) by Les Fehmi PhD and Jim Robbins. This book also includes a CD of guided exercises.
3. *Mindfulness Meditation for Pain Relief: Guided Practices for Reclaiming Your Body and Your Life* by Jon Kabat-Zinn. This two-CD Audio book, with short meditation exercises, is available to buy through Chapters. Many libraries carry all of the books written by Kabat-Zinn. These are links to YouTube videos on [Kabat-Zinn](#) and [mindfulness](#) .

MIRROR THERAPY

For patients with phantom limb pain or complex regional pain syndrome there is published evidence that using mirror boxes can reduce pain and improve function. A special mirror box is used. The normal arm or leg moves in the mirror box but what your eyes and brain see looks is the abnormal limb moving (the mirrors reverse the image so your left arm looks like your right arm. How this works is not well understood. Physiotherapists provide this therapy. Call your local hospital physio department or the provincial physiotherapist association to find out if it's available in your community. More explanation is on the [NOI group's website](#) (NOI is the Neuro Orthopedic Institute in Sydney Australia lead by some of the world-renowned physiotherapists who pioneered this work).

GETTING HELP – SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH PAIN AND DISABILITY

We HAVE NOT included resources and websites for specific types of pain as it would make this document a textbook but links for many different kinds of pain (i.e. Fibromyalgia, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, Diabetic Neuropathy) can be found on central websites like the Canadian Pain Society's PainExplained and others listed below.

WEBSITES BY PATIENTS FOR PATIENTS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

1. [The Chronic Pain Association of Canada \(CPAC\)](#) is committed to advancing the treatment and management of chronic intractable pain, developing research projects to promote the discovery of a cure for this disease, and educating both the health care community and the public to accomplish this mission. The cost is \$15.00 per year.

Phone: 1-(780)-482-6727 mail: cpac@chronicpaincanada.com

2. [The Canadian Pain Coalition \(CPC\)](#) is a partnership of patient pain groups, health professionals who care for people in pain, and scientists studying better ways of treating pain. The CPC's purpose is to promote sustained improvement in the treatment of all types of pain and its main goal is to have pain recognized as a health priority in Canada.

This website also has a specific [Pain Resource Centre](#). The Canadian Pain Coalition and the Education Special Interest Group of the Canadian Pain Society have developed the Pain Resource Centre to provide information to the Canadian public and to health care professionals in Canada with regard to the treatment and management of pain.

GENERAL WEBSITES for CHRONIC PAIN INFORMATION

1. [The Canadian Pain Society](#) has a website for pain information for patients and healthcare providers: (Note that as of Nov 8, 2011, the site is under construction)

2. [PainBC](#). The website of the BC Pain Society. Look for new information every month.

3. [The Association Quebecoise de la Douleur Chronique \(AQDC\)](#), (The Quebec Pain Association), is committed to improving the condition of people suffering from chronic pain in Québec and reducing their isolation.

4. [The international Association for the Study of Pain \(IASP\)](#)

GENERAL SUPPORT FOR A VARIETY OF PROBLEMS IN THE LOWER MAINLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

1. [Patient Voices Network](#). Peer-counseling and family support.

1-(604)-742-1772 Toll free: 1-(888)-742-1772

2. [SourcesBC](#). Community centres – support for patients and families.

1-(604)-531-6226

3. [Family Caregiver Network Society](#). Support for families of patients with disabilities.

Support is available Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

1-(877)-520-FCNS (3267)

4. [The Social Planning and Research Council of BC \(SPARC BC\)](#) – who you contact to get a Disability Parking pass.

1-(604)-718-7744 Parking Permit

5. [Workers Advisor Group](#). Please call for an appointment ONLY for issues related to Worksafe BC.

Office Hours: 8:30 – 4:30 Monday to Friday.

1-(800)-663-4261

6. [BC Coalition of People with Disabilities' Advocacy Access Program](#).

Their mission is to raise awareness around issues that affect the lives of people who live with a disability.

They also work to secure the necessary income supports for people with disabilities to live with dignity, and increase their ability to participate and contribute in their communities. They provide individual and group advocacy for people with disabilities and develop educational publications for people with disabilities, governments and the public, and sharing self-help skills with individuals and disability groups. They also help you fill in forms for tax rebates or government disability.

Please call for an appointment. Office Hours: 8:30 – 4:30, Monday to Friday.

1-(604)-872-1278

Toll free: 1-(800)-663-1278

7. [BC Housing](#). Information on rental subsidies and light housekeeping. 1-(800)-257-7756

8. **Disability Resources Guide**. Below are a summary of some helpful contacts from a useful book called the *Disability Resources Guide*. It is produced by the group Opportunities for the Disabled Foundation, who can be reached at 1-(604)-437-7780. Disability is not just about changed physical abilities. It is about changed personal situation which creates barriers to what you want to achieve.

Because financial concerns become part of those barriers, please also consider contacting the [PLAN institute for Caring Citizenship](#), where creative and practical solutions can be learned from others who have conquered your same issues.

1-(604)-439-9566.

9. [SEEDS](#). An Employment Insurance (EI)-based funding program for starting up a business. 1-(604)-590-4144

10. [The Neil Squire Society](#). The Neil Squire Society is the only national not-for-profit organization in Canada that has for over twenty-five years empowered Canadians with physical disabilities through the use of computer-based assistive technologies, research and development, and various employment programs. Through our work, we help our clients remove barriers so that they can live independent lives and become active members of the workplace and our society. Specializing in education and workplace empowerment, the Society has served over 20,000 people since 1984. Toll free: 1-877-673-4636

EXERCISE AND PACING

Our patients and studies both tell us that for many people who have chronic pain, trying to get regular exercise is a challenge, because of the uncertainty of how it will affect their pain levels. This phenomenon is termed “kinesiophobia” and means fear of movement. However, just as we need food, we also need exercise – you will be strengthening your body so it can fight pain. You may also find that it will increase your stamina, reduce fatigue and help with depression. So if you start to exercise regularly and you have a setback, don't be discouraged! Try different kinds of low-impact exercises – such as walking or yoga – to see which ones work best for you. On “bad days,” it is also helpful to visualize yourself exercising, and try breathing exercises – this helps to keep your body ready for exercise in small but regular steps.

Exercise guideline

These are some simple guidelines to assist you with being more successful when you exercise and work towards increasing your activities.

1. *The first thing is to find your baseline.*

This is the amount of activity or exercise that you know is safe for your body, and you know will not make you “pay for it later.” Even if this is a very small amount of activity, this is where you need to start.

2. *Push yourself just a bit*, to where there is a small increase in your pain. Then, to make it successful you need to do three things: work on keeping your breath calm, your body tension low, and at the same time monitor your pain.

If you ignore your pain, you won't know if you are pushing too much.
If you pay too much attention to it, that will increase your pain.

To help find that balance, try dividing your attention between the activity you are doing, keeping your breathing calm, keeping your body relaxed and attending to your pain a little bit.

If you are like most people, you will have noticed that ignoring the pain doesn't help you get better. You just pay for it later.

3. *Practice this more and more*. Then you can try pushing further into the pain. Keep working on calm breath and calm body to get good benefits.

4. *Choose an activity you want to do*. If you don't want to do any activity, pick something that will make your life easier, more fun, or help you reconnect with friends. Then do it a little bit.

Everyday.

When it gets a little easier, do a little more. Take your time.

Be persistent and patient.

It takes practice to change your nervous systems and your body when you have persistent pain.

1. **Restorative yoga** is available at many different yoga centers and is designed to accommodate people who cannot do the common poses. Call your local recreation centre or yoga studio to find courses offered near you. If you need to do this from home, you can order DVD's that have follow along programs. Neil Pearson has developed one that is designed specifically for people with chronic pain (see his website <http://www.lifeisnow.ca/>) but our patients have tried others and many have really enjoyed the sense of peace and accomplishment. Read about [one patient's experience with how yoga transformed her pain](#).

2. [BC Leisure Access Program](#).

This program provides subsidized access to recreation centres. Sign up for anything that looks appealing.
Hours of operation: Monday to Friday, 8:30am–4:30pm. 1-(604)-257-8497.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

IMPROVING GENERAL LIFESTYLE CHOICES

[BestLifeRewarded™](#) is the first-ever Canadian loyalty program that actually rewards people for getting healthy. There is no cost to join or stay in the program and they state they have zero tolerance for sharing your private information .

LOCAL RESOURCES FOR EATING WELL

[Harvest box program](#). This provides low cost fresh produce for families in Delta, Surrey, White Rock and Langley.

Harvest Box occurs once a month (last Thursday of the month), except December.

1-(778)-228-6614

STOP SMOKING

[QuitNow By Phone](#) is a confidential, quit smoking support service available to British Columbians. Call Toll-Free to 1-877-455-2233 and speak to a professional quit specialist who will guide and support you through your quitting process. Translation services are available. The BC Ministry of Health has a great web site filled with the same resources- everything you'll need to help you quit smoking!

SUPPLEMENTS THAT MAY RELIEVE NERVE PAIN

These supplements are the only ones that have some medical evidence to support this recommendation.

1. **Alpha Lipoid Acid (ALA)** is an antioxidant that protects nerves and their blood supply. There are at least 3 good trials that show pain relief in patients with nerve damage from neuropathy. Most of the studies used 600mg once a day. Do a 3-week trial to assess it, increasing it if you need to and can tolerate it up to 600 mg three times a day. Side effects included nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In high doses (>600mg/day), it can lower blood sugars so diabetics may have to be careful. It is found naturally in liver, broccoli and spinach.

2. **Acetyl-L carnitine (ALC)** has multiple mechanisms. There is some evidence that it may help you if you have diabetic neuropathy or nerve damage after chemotherapy. Other causes of nerve pain have not yet been researched, but it may be helpful. The doses in studies have ranged from 1000–2000mg per day. Side effects were mild but included stomach discomfort, restlessness and headaches.

3. **Vitamin E** is another antioxidant. At least 3 trials have demonstrated that using it while receiving (not after) a nerve-damaging chemotherapy agent called paclitaxel significantly reduced nerve pain. The doses used ranged from 400mg once a day to 300mg twice a day.

GENERAL SUPPLEMENT ADVICE

These supplements have research that supports these recommendations.

1. **Vitamin D** is technically a hormone but almost everyone in Canada has lower than recommended levels. It is important for building strong bones. Recommendations are to take 1000 IU per day. This is especially important if you take opioids for pain as they can affect your hormones and lower your body's ability to effectively build bone.

2. **Calcium** is also important for maintaining good bone health Here's [more information on measuring your bone density](#) , and some [information on calcium in food and supplements](#) . If you are on opioids it is probably a really good idea to take at least one calcium tablet containing 500mg of elemental calcium per day. We recommend you take on combined with magnesium as the magnesium counteracts the constipating effect of the calcium.

3. **Omega 3 Fatty Acids** have been shown to reduce the amount of anti-inflammatories needed by patients with rheumatoid arthritis and was helpful when used by patients with neck and low back pain. The recommended dose is 500mg per day of EPA and to buy molecularly distilled versions to avoid mercury and PCB's (such as Webber Naturals Omega-3 Premium).

4. **Magnesium Citrate 250 mg bid.** Magnesium is necessary to relax smooth muscles and plays an important function in blocking pain transmitting receptors called NMDA receptors. One study demonstrated that patients with Fibromyalgia who had low levels of magnesium were more likely to report fatigue.

RECREATION – THINGS YOU CAN DO

1. [Vancouver Park Board's Leisure Access Card](#) — subsidized access. Phone 604-257-8497 to apply.
2. List of [183 pleasurable things to do](#) - when you feel like you have run out of ideas