

Health for the Whole Family

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Pain, Pain Go Away

We all experience pain at some point in our lives. But, when does pain go from normal, everyday pain to chronic pain? An osteopathic physician discusses the causes and symptoms of chronic pain and how the 76 million Americans who live with it can find relief.

What is chronic pain?

“Chronic pain is considered a persistent type of pain lasting for three months to six months or longer, and lingers beyond the “normal” expected course for healing,” says our consulting physician. “It can be mild or severe, continuous or sporadic, merely uncomfortable or totally incapacitating.”

According to the doctor, headaches, joint pain, pain from injury, and backaches are the most common sources of pain. Other kinds of chronic pain include tendinitis, sinus pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, diabetic neuropathy, fibromyalgia, and pain affecting specific parts of the body, such as the shoulders, pelvis, and neck.

The doctor notes, however, that many people suffer from chronic pain in the absence of injury or any previous damage to the body.

What are the symptoms of chronic pain?

When dealing with chronic pain, experiences can vary greatly.

“Some people experience shooting, burning or stabbing pains while others experience a ‘pins and needles’ feeling, or soreness, tightness and stiffness,” explains our doctor.

Pain is almost always associated with a number of related symptoms like sleeplessness, withdrawal from activity, weakened immune system, and changes in mood including hopelessness, fear, depression, irritability, anxiety, and stress.

“One of the most devastating effects of chronic pain is the emotional toll it takes on the individual,” says the doctor. “The anxiety, depression and fatigue that often accompany chronic pain can decrease the body’s production of natural painkillers and make the pain worse.”

What are the treatment options for chronic pain?

Just as there are multiple types of chronic pain, there are a wide variety of treatment options, from medication to hands-on techniques.

“Effective pain treatment requires an individualized pain management program created through patient and physician collaboration,” says our doctor. “It takes into account both the physical and the emotional/mental symptoms.”

What should I do if I’m experiencing pain?

If you are living with chronic pain, the doctor recommends doing the following:

1. Assess your pain. Online tools like the American Osteopathic Association’s (AOA) [pain quiz and assessment tool](#) will help you describe and track your pain.
2. Set an appointment to speak with your physician about your pain.
3. Work with your physician to come up with an individualized treatment plan that meets your needs.
4. Follow your personalized pain management/treatment plan.

“You don’t have to suffer in silence if you’re living with pain,” says our doctor. “By starting the conversation with your physician, you will be taking an important first step in finding relief.”

For more information on chronic pain and to download pain management tools from the AOA’s “Break Through Your Pain” Campaign, please visit www.osteopathic.org.

Preventive medicine is just one aspect of care osteopathic physicians (DOs) provide. DOs are fully licensed to prescribe medicine and practice in all specialty areas, including surgery. DOs are trained to consider the health of the whole person and use their hands to help diagnose and treat their patients.