

Will Power

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MOVE ALONG, BACK PAIN!

Q: Exercise is supposed to help back pain, but pain keeps me from exercising. Am I doomed to be stuck in a rut?

A: It does seem like a cruel joke nature plays on our bodies that the treatment and the problem seem the same. As we enter our 40s, we lose some of our muscle elasticity, we develop bad habits, like sitting for too long or smoking. We also lift things without thinking about posture and body mechanics.

Sometimes we fall or strain a muscle. These are examples of acute back pain that needs to be treated, usually with rest and ice. But chronic back pain, pain that lingers for three months or longer, is very common. Approximately 80% of adults report some chronic mid or low back pain at some point. And that chronic type can be treated with.... yep, exercise!

Start low and go slow. Try low impact exercise first, like simple stretches or swimming. Take a gently walk around the block, or if you are really stuck, walk around the house. Work your way up to a yoga or stretch class. Maintain good posture. Pay attention to your spine when you are sitting and standing. Imagine a string lifting you up by the top of your head. Even these simple corrections make a big difference. Don't overdo it. Avoid any exercise that feels like too much, or causes pain.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

Why is a baseball game a good place to go on a hot day?

Because there are lots of fans

Physical therapy is covered by Medicare and other insurance if your doctor orders it. A physical therapist can teach body mechanics for activities you do every day, as well as create a home exercise program.

Speaking of doctors, if you visit the doctor for back pain, ask about alternatives to pain medication. Many offices and clinics offer wellness program that offer non-drug alternatives to chronic pain management, including even support groups and education about the causes of back pain.

Whatever steps you take metaphorically to treat your chronic back pain, please take steps literally as well. Move your way through the pain, and keep going!

Find a guide to simple stretches here: www.mayoclinic.org/healthy.../stretching/sls-20076840

Sources:

http://www.niams.nih.gov/health_info/back_pain/back_pain_ff.asp

"Pain Relief Now!" in Consumer Reports, June 2016.

"Slide Show: A Guide to Basic Stretches," at: www.mayoclinic.org/healthy.../stretching/sls-20076840

WILL CALL

Do you or someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or wrpioneers.org





GET OUT & ABOUT

Did you go to summer camp as a kid? There you could try macramé, water-skiing, or candle-making. In other words, summer is a time to check in with your adventurous side by trying a new activity. But adults don't have camp counselors to drag them to arts & crafts, so how do you get started on something new?

Try a meet-up. A meet-up is a group of like-minded people who set a routine time to meet locally to do an activity, together. For example, if you have been walking and now want to try hiking, find a meet-up near you that hikes local trails. If you would like a group of ladies who walk to lunch, there's a meet-up for that. If you are a gentleman who wants to try Tai Chi, there's a meet-up for that. There are over 80,000 meet-ups, so there is something for everyone who wants to try a new activity, for fun, exercise or both, and you don't have to do it alone. Meet-ups are casual, so if you decide you don't like it, you simply don't go back to that group and try another. You can find them all at meetup.com.

Another source of activity information is your local parks and recreation department. Some cities and counties still publish a summer calendar of events,

like concerts in the park, or cooking classes for adults. You can always call your local city hall and inquire.

Interested in swimming? Join the U.S. Master Swimmers. Don't let the word "Master" frighten you away from this outstanding physical summer activity. "In swimming, Masters simply means 18 and older," says the group's website (www.usms.org). They have over 1500 groups nationwide. You cannot find a more supportive group of fellow swimmers and coaches anywhere, and you don't have to compete or be in peak physical shape.

It can be daunting to go out with a group of strangers, but don't all friends start as strangers? Joining an activity gets you much-needed socialization and helps keep you on track with the need for physical movement. Summer seems like the perfect time to step out of your comfort zone. You can always climb back indoors when the days get longer. Or you might find that you love it and have a class or group for all seasons!



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Do the best you can, and don't take life too serious. - Will Rogers

