

Tips for Chronic Pain

*The SSF thanks Stuart S. Kassan, MD, FACP,
Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center,
Denver, Colorado, for authoring this Patient Education Sheet.*

Chronic pain is defined as “persistent pain” and is a common complaint in Sjögren’s syndrome. For example, Sjögren’s patients often complain of muscle aches, joint pain, oral and eye pain, and pain from neuropathies and vasculitis. Not only does pain interfere with everyday life functions, it contributes to “brain fog,” fatigue, and a general lack of mental well-being. Some tips for dealing with chronic pain:

- ▶ **Continue caring for the condition causing your pain.**
 - The underlying medical condition needs to be attended to on a continuing basis.
- ▶ **Pay attention to any new pain problems.**
 - Your pain may be caused by other conditions not related to your underlying chronic pain condition or disease. These conditions need to be investigated aggressively.
- ▶ **Don’t be a couch potato.**
 - A common cause of chronic pain is de-conditioning or getting badly out of shape. An intelligent and consistent exercise program with your doctor’s approval may be extremely helpful.
- ▶ **If you are overweight, shed those pounds.**
 - As a general rule, do your best to maintain a healthy weight by pursuing a healthy diet as well as initiating an exercise program if okayed by your physician.
- ▶ **Avoid pain triggers.**
 - Try to understand what causes the pain to get worse and avoid those triggers if possible.
- ▶ **Don’t let stress compound your pain.**
 - Stress is the result of the way you react to the world, and heightened stress equals heightened pain. Learn relaxation techniques or seek help in reducing your stress level.
- ▶ **Get enough sleep.**
 - Practice good sleep habits and get adequate sleep on a continuing basis.
- ▶ **Don’t let depression persist.**
 - Find out if depression is a problem for you, and discuss potential treatment with your physician.
- ▶ **Remember your rights as a health consumer.**
 - Try to gain as much information as possible from your health care providers. Become an active participant in treatment decisions and an informed consumer.

For more information on chronic pain, read “Chronic Pain for Dummies,” authored by Stuart S. Kassan, MD, FACP, Charles J. Vierck, Jr., PhD, and Elizabeth Vierck, MS, published by Wiley Publishing, Inc. in 2008.

For more information on Sjögren’s syndrome, visit the SSF Web site at www.sjogrens.org, call 800-475-6473, e-mail ssf@sjogrens.org or write to the Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation, 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817.

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