

# PAIN RELIEF GUIDE

Tips and advice from your pharmacist.





## **Rite Aid Pharmacists: Your Pain Relief Managers**

Rite Aid is committed to providing everyday products and services that help our valued customers lead healthier, happier lives. Our pharmacists are on hand to talk with you about your health and medication concerns. We further support their efforts with free informational materials for our customers. Rite Aid has developed this Pain Relief Guide in conjunction with the American Pain Foundation.

The American Pain Foundation (APF) is an independent, nonprofit organization serving people with pain through information, advocacy and support. As Rite Aid continues its mission of ensuring that customers receive the kind of information and services that really make a difference, the American Pain Foundation has been an invaluable resource. The American Pain Foundation is dedicated to providing comprehensive information about pain and its management. Its contributions to the information in this guide are not intended to imply endorsement. For more information on the foundation, visit [www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org).

## **Pain Management At-A-Glance**

More than 70 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, and each year another 25 million experience acute pain from injuries or surgery. Although many different types of pain can be greatly eased with proper management, most goes untreated, under-treated or improperly treated. This guide is designed to help you learn about pain and understand the different treatments available.



**Successful pain therapy** aims to lessen your pain, improve functioning and enhance the quality of your life.



## Pain Myths and Facts

**The Myth:** Pain is something you “just have to live with.”

**The Facts:** Treatments are available to lessen most pain. Left untreated, pain can worsen other health problems, slow recovery and interfere with healing. Get help right away. Don’t let anyone tell you your pain is “just in your head.”

**The Myth:** All healthcare providers know how to treat pain.

**The Facts:** Not all healthcare providers can treat pain effectively. If your healthcare provider is unable to offer sufficient pain relief, ask him or her to refer you to a pain management specialist.

**The Myth:** Most healthy people go through life pain free.

**The Facts:** Everybody experiences some type of pain during a typical day. It could be the result of a headache, a cut, recurring pain from an old injury, or an illness such as arthritis. Different types of pain vary widely in severity. Individual tolerance for pain also fluctuates from person to person. When managing pain, it’s important to remember that zero pain is not a realistic goal.

**The Myth:** Most side effects from opioid pain medications are unbearable and never go away.

**The Facts:** Nausea, drowsiness, itching and most other side effects caused by morphine and similar opioid medications usually last only a few days. Constipation, the side effect that is most difficult to manage, can usually be relieved with laxatives, adequate fluid intake and attention to diet.

**The Myth:** Once pain starts, it will only get worse.

**The Facts:** If you act quickly when pain starts, you can often prevent it from getting worse. Take your medications when you first experience pain. If your pain does get worse, talk to your healthcare provider. Your provider may safely prescribe higher doses or change the prescription. Non-drug therapies, such as relaxation training, can also help give you relief.

# How to Talk to Your Doctor About Pain

To get the best pain relief possible, it's important that you communicate your pain effectively to your doctor. Here are a few tips that will help you and your doctor manage your pain.

**1. Speak up! Tell your doctor, nurse or social worker that you're in pain.**

It's not a sign of weakness to talk about your pain.

**2. Tell your doctor, nurse or social worker where it hurts.** Do you have pain in one place or several places? Does the pain seem to move around?

**3. Describe how much your pain hurts.** Use a scale from 0 to 10, where zero means no pain at all and 10 means the worst pain you can imagine. Explain when your pain is the highest, lowest and how it is right now.

**4. Describe what makes your pain better or worse.** Is the pain always there? Does it go away? Does it get worse when you move in certain ways? Do other things make it better or worse?

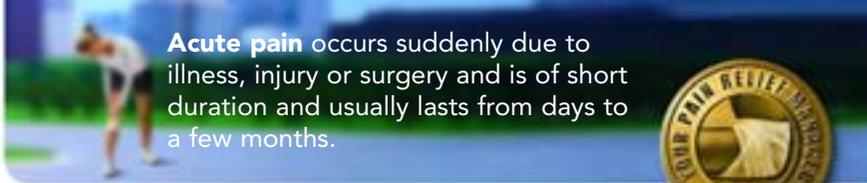
**5. Describe what your pain feels like.** Use specific words like sharp, stabbing, dull, aching, burning, shock-like, tingling, throbbing, deep, pressing, etc.

**6. Explain how the pain affects your daily life.** Can you sleep? Work? Exercise? Participate in social activities? Concentrate? How does it affect your mood?

**7. Tell your doctor, nurse or social worker about past treatments for pain.**

Have you taken prescription medication or had surgery? Tried massage? Applied heat or cold? Exercised? Taken over-the-counter medications? Vitamins or supplements?

**Tip:** Write down your questions for the doctor or nurse before an appointment. Take notes at your visit. If possible, bring along a family member or friend for support.



**Acute pain** occurs suddenly due to illness, injury or surgery and is of short duration and usually lasts from days to a few months.



## Getting to the Root of Your Pain

Pain may be the result of a health condition. Whenever possible, your healthcare provider should make every effort to treat the cause of your pain.

- If you have rheumatoid arthritis, you may be prescribed drugs to treat the arthritis itself because pain medicines will not prevent the disease from damaging your joints.
- If you have migraine headaches, there are medicines that can prevent or reduce the frequency and severity of headaches, reducing the need to use pain medications.
- If you have osteoporosis, your provider may recommend that you take medications to strengthen your bones to help prevent fractures that could result in pain and disability.
- Surgery also plays a critical role in pain control. Replacement of a knee or hip may provide relief of pain and reduce or eliminate the need for analgesics.
- If you have diabetes, it is important to control your blood sugar, because that may prevent nerve and blood vessel damage that can result in a variety of painful problems commonly seen with this disease.

## Diabetes and the Pain of Neuropathy

Neuropathy is a disease of the nervous system that can affect people with diabetes. It interferes with the body's ability to communicate with its own muscles, skin, joints and internal organs. Diabetic neuropathy commonly affects the legs and feet. Primary symptoms are a tingling sensation, numbness, and/or pain.

There are a variety of ways to deal with the pain of diabetic neuropathy, but the best defense is getting and keeping your blood glucose within normal range. Be aware that as you do so, it is not uncommon to experience more tingling or pain at first.

## Pain Medications

There are different types of medications for pain control:

**Non-Opioids:** Non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), salicylates and acetaminophen

**Opioids (also known as narcotics):** Codeine and morphine are examples

**Non-Traditional Analgesics:** A loose term referring to the many medications originally used to treat conditions other than pain, but now used to help relieve specific pain problems; examples include some antidepressants and anticonvulsants

**Topical Analgesics:** Drugs that are applied topically for pain relief

**Local Anesthetics:** Drugs that are administered directly to the area of pain

### Non-Opioid Pain Relievers (OTC = over-the-counter)

Type of Drug	Uses	Possible Side Effects
NSAIDs:* ibuprofen (OTC) naproxen (OTC) ketoprofen (OTC)	Used to treat mild to moderate acute and chronic pain. They are especially effective for relieving pain due to inflammation, or pain in patients with bone cancer.	GI distress Stomach ulcers GI bleeding Delayed blood clotting Decreased kidney function Headache Slowed thinking
Salicylates: aspirin (OTC) magnesium salicylate (OTC)	Used to treat inflammation, pain and fever.	Allergic reactions – hives, swelling of throat Ringing in ears, Nausea Headaches, Blood in urine Black, bloody stool
Acetaminophen (OTC)	Used to relieve mild to moderate pain and treat fever.	Liver damage Kidney damage

\* Prescription NSAIDS also available.

Complementary-Alternative Medicine (CAM), physical therapy and specialized pain treatments can be an option for dealing with the pain of neuropathy. The key is to work with your healthcare provider regarding your treatment of pain.

It may be helpful to ask about:

- Measures your healthcare provider can take to help relieve the pain
- Seeing an endocrinologist, neurologist or podiatrist who will be aware of new medications and treatments for peripheral neuropathy
- Visiting a certified pedorthist who can help you select shoes that may help alleviate pain and prevent further foot problems

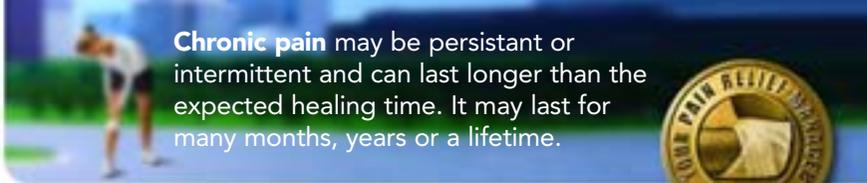
For more information on neuropathy, visit [dLife.com](http://dLife.com).

## Your Pain Management Team

Many common pain problems can be managed by your primary care provider. When pain is more difficult to treat, you may need to consult a team of professionals. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Specialty physicians from the fields of neurology, neurosurgery, physical medicine, anesthesia, orthopedics, psychiatry, rheumatology, etc.
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Social workers
- Psychologists
- Case managers





**Chronic pain** may be persistent or intermittent and can last longer than the expected healing time. It may last for many months, years or a lifetime.

- Chiropractors
- Physical therapists, occupational therapists, physiatrists
- Complementary/alternative medicine practitioners

Remember, your relationship with various members of your pain management team is a two-way street. Open communication is key to receiving quality care. Be sure to find a healthcare professional who is not only trained to treat your pain disorder, but is also willing to work with you to manage your pain. At each follow-up visit, it is important to reassess your pain management plan to ensure effectiveness.

## **Pain Management Options**

Treating pain requires an understanding that pain affects the whole person – the mind, body and spirit. Integrative medicine addresses the whole person by encompassing medical science along with ancient healing insights. It supports the use of conventional treatments, such as medications, counseling, exercise or surgery, and combines this approach with holistic pain-relieving techniques like acupuncture, bio-feedback, massage or chiropractic manipulations.

Managing your pain is an important step to reclaiming your life and making sure pain doesn't control you. Luckily, there are a variety of treatment options. Only you and your doctor can decide which is the right choice for you.

### **Medication Options**

Medications play an important role in the treatment of pain. Some medicines, such as aspirin, ibuprofen and acetaminophen, can be purchased over the counter (OTC) at your local Rite Aid, but most pain relievers are only available with a prescription.



**Did you know?** Pain may feel worse if you are stressed, depressed or anxious.

## Opioid Pain Relievers

Type of Drug	Uses	Side Effects
Codeine Hydrocodone Propoxyphene Oxycodone Hydromorphone Meperidine Methadone Fentanyl Oxymorphone Tramadol	Used to block moderate to severe pain.	Constipation Nausea Vomiting Sedation (sleepiness) Mental clouding Itching Dizziness Difficulty urinating

Although opioids are very effective in treating pain, you and your doctor may want to discuss tolerance, physical dependence and addiction.

- Tolerance refers to the situation in which a drug becomes less effective over time.
- Physical dependence means that a person will develop symptoms and signs of withdrawal (e.g., sweating, rapid heart rate, nausea, diarrhea, goosebumps, anxiety) if the drug is suddenly stopped or the dosage is lowered too quickly. Physical dependence is normal and does not mean you are addicted.
- Persons with an addiction have lost control over use of the drug yet continue to use it even when the drug is doing harm to themselves or others.

## Non-Traditional Analgesics

Some medications used to treat pain are also typically used to treat other non-pain-related conditions. Here are some examples:

- Some drugs used to manage depression or seizures can be used to treat neuropathic or nerve pain.
- Some steroid medications, such as prednisone and dexamethasone, may be used to treat pain caused by inflammation or bone disease.
- Some medications used to relax muscles, or treat insomnia or anxiety may be used in the overall management of pain.

## Topical Analgesics

Topical analgesics are pain-relieving creams, gels and ointments you can buy at your local Rite Aid Pharmacy. Some contain menthol or capsaicin and may be helpful for muscle or bone pain, or pain that affects muscles, ligaments, tendons and/or bones.

## Local Anesthetics

Local anesthetics have different uses and can be administered in a variety of ways:

- Through an injection, such as before receiving stitches or having surgery
- Through a catheter in the spine for longer term pain relief
- Through a patch for chronic pain
- Applied directly to skin and open wounds in the form of a cream or ointment

## Supplements

Nutritional supplements are gaining popularity among those suffering from joint pain. Ask your healthcare provider about the benefits of adding a supplement containing glucosamine and chondroitin to your treatment. Promoting healthy cartilage with these may help to reduce symptoms associated with arthritis and other chronic joint problems.

## Other Pain Management Options

These additional pain management options may be used alone or in conjunction with medication:

- Psychological consultation and counseling
- Stress management techniques, such as meditation and guided imagery
- Hypnotherapy and hypnosis
- Physical rehabilitation and occupational therapy
- Exercise
- Hydrotherapy or the use of hot and cold water to promote healing
- Myofascial therapy, which is the use of hands-on manipulation of muscle and skin to relieve pain
- Osteopathic Manipulation Treatment (OMT), a type of hands-on technique that is considered more comprehensive than a chiropractic spinal adjustment



**Keep a pain diary.** Write about your level of pain at different times, how you're feeling, and what activities you can and cannot do.



- Casts, splints and braces for the protection of bones and tissue following an injury
- Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), an electrical unit that interrupts pain signals in the body
- A variety of physical manipulation methods, such as chiropractic and other hands-on healing techniques performed by a physical therapist or complementary practitioner
- Alternative medicine practices, including homeopathic medicine, naturopathic medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture and reflexology
- Aromatherapy
- Nutrition and dietary supplements

## Have a Clear and Realistic Expectation of Relief

Managing pain is an important step to living a full and productive life. No matter what pain management treatment you and your doctor choose, it's wise to keep several points in mind. If you do you'll have a better chance of finding a treatment that works for you and suits your lifestyle.

- Accept that you may always live with some degree of pain.
  - Chronic pain tends not to disappear.
  - Decide to do all you can to reduce your pain to a tolerable level.
  - Commit to living life again.
  - Remember that pain is a *part* of you, but it is not you.





With us, it's personal.