

# Living Well with Persistent Pain

## **Goals for a Better Life**

The goal of treating persistent pain is to help you feel better and to improve your quality of life. Keep this in mind as you try treatments for your pain. Set reasonable and positive goals for what you want to accomplish and how you would like to improve your health and well-being.

You can take responsibility for making your life better despite your pain. Learn about your condition and what causes the pain. For most people, pain is nothing to be afraid of and it can be controlled safely.

## **Relaxation**

Look for ways to relax and enjoy yourself. Learning relaxation techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises, imagery, or progressive muscle relaxation can help you get through stressful times.

Try to keep your mind flexible, and look for chances to have fun or to get things done. Remember that boredom makes pain worse. So find activities, exercise, and conversation that will help take your mind off your pain.

Don't get too upset when things don't go as well as you hoped (they rarely do). Remember that bad times can make you appreciate the better times to come.

## **Exercise**

Exercise can help reduce pain in several ways. Physical therapy, massage, stretching, and gentle movement, even of painful areas, may improve the strength and flexibility of your muscles and joints. This can help relieve pain in the long run.

***Exercise,  
continued***

Aerobic exercise, such as bicycling, fitness walking, or swimming, can release endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Most people can find an aerobic exercise that they can do at some level despite their pain. The best use for your pain medicine is to help you exercise and be more active.

***Reasonable  
Expectations***

In your work and other responsibilities, make sure to set reasonable goals for yourself. Learn to save energy, to pace yourself, and to accept the limits that your condition sets for you at any given moment.

To work more comfortably and effectively, you can:

- Maintain good posture
- Use the right equipment for your work and condition
- Change your position frequently
- Do regular stretching

***Medications***

When you take medicines, use them as a tool to help you accomplish your goals, not just reduce the pain. Recognize that medicines can only give you the **opportunity** to feel better. You can use the opportunity that pain relief brings to improve your life in the present moment, which will help you to get stronger and feel better for the long term.