

PAINnews

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Senior Pain Care

Though getting older is the way of life, it is a transition most of us do not look forward to.

Elderly individuals have a harder time with normal activities and often need additional assistance for undertakings such as driving, heavy lifting, exercising, etc. These seemingly easy tasks can become unbearable with age. Often seniors won't admit when they need help, so not to appear frail or for fear of becoming a burden to others.

The American Chronic Pain Association revealed that 34% of senior citizens suffer from pain daily. An additional 12% often experience regular pain throughout the course of a week.

Though increasing pain is often considered an unavoidable part of the aging process, the discomfort of our elderly loved ones should not be tolerated or accepted. Proper pain prevention and treatment can aid elders to live longer, dignified, and productive lives.

It is important to recognize when an elderly person is suffering from chronic pain, even if he or she may not complain about discomfort. Watch for subtle signs of pain such as scowling facial expressions, the rubbing of aches, or restrictions in movement. A reliable assessment often relies on observing body language. It is also important to watch for changes in typical behavior.

Dementia is a common symptom that seniors develop as they get older. Ask questions and take notes. Evaluating the location and severity of your loved one's pain requires specific information that medical specialists can refer to. If the elderly individual can undertake this task on his or her own, then they may do so.

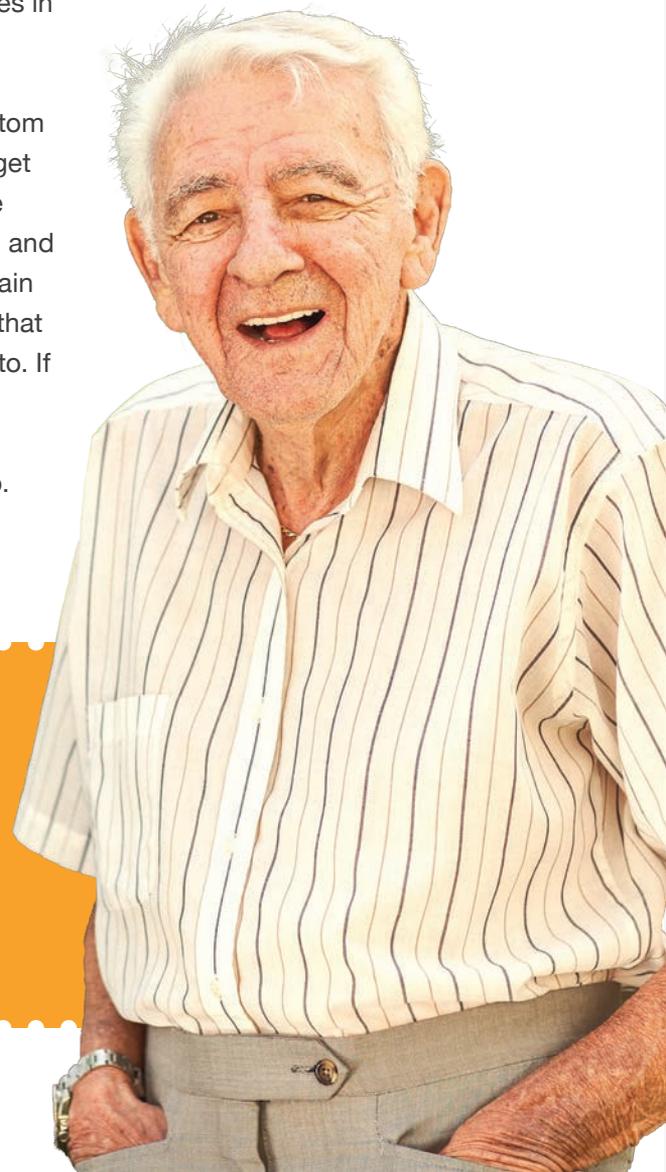
Simultaneously keep a journal, which should document details such as:

- Where the pain occurs
- When it feels better/worse
- What activities cause the pain to flare up

If your loved one is older, you are a caretaker for a senior citizen or perhaps elderly yourself, consult with our medical staff today. The TriState Pain Institute continues to lead the way to provide security and relief for all those "young at heart" throughout Mohave County.

Signs of pain in older adults with dementia:

- Facial expressions- frowning, looking frightened, grimacing, keeping eyes tightly closed, rapid blinking
- Moaning, groaning, sighing, grunting
- A tense body posture, fidgeting, packing, rocking
- Changes in eating or sleep habits
- Increased confusion, irritability, distress, wandering





The MRI-Compatible "Pain Pacemaker"

In 2002 and after decades of back surgeries and chronic pain, comedian Jerry Lewis was contemplating suicide. It was upon hearing of a “pacemaker for pain” that Lewis agreed to have a trial spinal cord stimulator implanted. The trial began with temporary spinal cord stimulator leads inserted into his spine for five days. During this trial, Lewis’ pain was so dramatically decreased that Dr. Benjamin Venger subsequently implanted a permanent spinal cord stimulator.

Neuromodulation is a field that focuses on the implantation of devices to alter the normal electrical impulses that travel within the nervous system. Spinal cord stimulators were developed to reduce pain from damage to the spinal cord and nerve roots, neuropathy, failed spinal surgery, reflex sympathetic dystrophy, amputation pain, and other chronic pain conditions. A spinal cord stimulator uses similar technology to that of a heart pacemaker, is inserted under the skin, making it practically invisible.

Since 1991, Dr. Venger has performed over 2,500 neurostimulation procedures. One shortcoming of spinal cord stimulators is that they have not been compatible with

MRI imaging. In summer 2013, Dr. Venger had the honor of becoming the first physician in the Western United States and one of the initial three physicians nationwide to implant an MRI-compatible spinal cord stimulator. Patients with cancer, neurological diseases, and other conditions necessitating MRI scanning are no longer excluded from the use of the spinal cord stimulator.

One of the key aspects of spinal cord stimulation is the trial insertion of temporary leads. Patients can test this specific technology before it is permanently placed at surgery. “Like most of the pain procedures we offer, the spinal stimulator trial insertion can be conveniently performed in our office,” notes Dr. Venger. Since establishing the TriState Pain Institute in Ft. Mohave nearly four years ago, Dr. Venger and his associate Dr. Charles Stevens continue to add other treatment options not only to address pain, but also tackle the prescription drug problems throughout Mohave County. As both a neurosurgeon and pain medicine expert, Dr. Venger offers a unique perspective on the current state of pain management. “The cost of pain conditions extends well beyond just dollars, impacting our families, communities and way of life. Therefore, if we provide for a small initial investment in these technologies, a vast saving for the future can occur.”



Anti-Inflammatory Eating

Chronic inflammation is a root cause of many serious diseases, especially in those that are developed from aging. An anti-inflammatory diet can help people maintain optimum health over their lifetime while still enjoying a wide variety of delicious and colorful food.

Pumpkin is said to have anti-inflammatory properties, and during this time of year, pumpkin recipes can be found everywhere. Check out this anti-inflammatory pumpkin soup recipe:

Pumpkin Soup

(makes 8 servings)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 1-inch piece gingerroot, peeled & minced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 6 cups vegetable stock, divided
- 4 cups pumpkin puree
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
- ½ cup half-and-half
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh parsley

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat large soup pot on medium-cook onions, garlic, and ginger in ½ cup vegetable stock until tender (5 minutes)
2. Add pumpkin, remaining 5½ cups stock, salt, and thyme. Cook 30 minutes
3. Puree soup until smooth with handheld blender
4. Remove soup from heat and stir in half-and-half
5. Serve sprinkled with chopped parsley

Empowering Patients to Eliminate Pain



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