Working With Chronic Pain

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How to Cope While Working With Chronic Pain

Living with chronic pain can be difficult, as pain affects all areas of your life. If you experience pain at home you may take some time to lie down and rest. You may accept or decline gatherings with family and friends when you have a bad day. But do you have a plan on how to handle working with chronic pain on a daily basis? Below are some tips to consider:

1. **Tell your employer about your pain.** You may fear that telling your boss about your medical condition can cause problems. But think that he will not realize you are in pain, unless you tell him. Pain affects your productivity and ability to complete your job. You may need some time off for doctor's appointments or just take a day off.
2. **Ask your employer to consult a health professional with expertise in ergonomics.** The way you spend the day at work can make your pain worse. If your chair is at the wrong height , if you keep the keyboard in the wrong position, if you do certain repetitive movements, lift heavy objects in a wrong way, work long hours without breaks, or stand most of the time - all these can trigger or worsen your pain. Many employers hire occupational therapists or kinesiologists for this purpose - to teach employees proper techniques to improve workplace health and safety.An occupational therapist will assess the impact of pain on your day to day life, including your work. He will teach you how to maintain the optimal posture while working, how to adjust the desk, chair or computer to work comfortably and may also recommend special equipment such as ergonomic chairs, back pillows, a special keyboard and mouse, and document folders. Many employers will cover some of these basic ergonomic tools.

Quick tips to avoid pain while at work

- Take five minute breaks on a regular basis, especially if you spend lots of time in the same position (like sitting or standing)
- Be careful when you lift heavy objects - try to keep your knees bent and the heavy object close to your body when you lift , without twisting your body
- Pay attention to what triggers pain, and avoid or modify those activities - the occupational therapist will help you modify those activities
- Try to improve your fitness levels - the stronger your muscles and joints are, the more flexible you will be. Do some stretching exercises every day
- Eat healthy - at work and at home. Have an apple instead of a muffin or doughnut. Bring your homemade meal, rather than ordering a hamburger or hot dog. Fast foods promote inflammation and aggravate pain. On the other hand, a diet based on fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meat and fish, as well as nuts and seeds have anti-inflammatory qualities.
- Learn to cope with stress, as stress can trigger or aggravate pain. Try deep breaths, visualization, meditation or yoga.