Chronic Knee Pain Tip Sheet

Many Americans have resigned themselves to pain because they simply feel it’s a normal condition. According to a recent survey by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA), close to one in two Americans say pain is part of life, while another 41% believe pain is a standard part of the aging process.

The AOA survey also found:

**Pain does not discriminate.** Although many people think chronic pain is a normal part of aging, it can affect anyone – regardless of age. In fact, close to 65% of Americans ages 18 to 34 have experienced chronic pain or someone they care for has experienced chronic pain during the past year.

**Americans are keeping quiet.** Almost 60% of Americans confess they might not talk to a medical professional if they were suffering from chronic pain. And more than one-third of Americans would refuse to take doctor-recommended pain medications because they fear becoming addicted.

**Second most common cause:** Knee pain is the number two cause of chronic pain; more than one-third of Americans report being affected by knee pain. Sometimes knee pain may be the result of too much weight on the knee joint. Other times it may be due to injury or improper technique during activity.

Rob Danoff, DO, an AOA board-certified family physician and a fellow of the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, explains common ways to treat chronic knee pain:

1) **Try alternating between warm and cool treatments:** While everyone is different and techniques that work for one person may not work for another, sometimes alternating between cool compresses and warm moist heat provides relief. Try using one or the other every four to six hours for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Cool compresses may help to reduce inflammation while warm moist heat can relax and loosen tissues while stimulating blood flow to the area. Be careful to use moderate heat for a limited time – about 20 minutes – to avoid burns. Also, never leave heating pads/towels on for extended periods of time or while sleeping.

2) **Incorporate strength and mobility training:** The type of exercises you can perform will depend on the health of your knee. Aerobic exercise in a non-weight bearing environment – such as a pool – can help you lose weight and ultimately reduce the strain on your knees. Talk to your physician about other exercises that will help take direct pressure off the joint by building up the muscles that surround the knee.

3) **Stretch.** Stretching the muscles and tendons surrounding the joint can help with some causes of knee pain.

4) **Update your shoes.** Shoes are meant to absorb the shock during movement, and when they don’t, the shock travels up to your knee.

5) **Don’t give up on finding relief.** When home remedies aren’t helping, seek medical advice from an experienced osteopathic physician (DO). DOs believe that looking at the whole body with a more comprehensive approach to care will help patients find relief. Some DOs use osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT) to help deal with chronic pain. With OMT, your DO will use his or her hands to move your muscles and joints through techniques that include stretching, gentle pressure and resistance. Sometimes a prescription pain medication may still be necessary along with other treatments. The important thing to remember is to consult your physician in order to come up with a treatment plan that is right for you.

[i] http://orthopedics.about.com/cs/sportsmedicine/a/iceorheat.htm