

## Lifestyle Changes Can Relieve Life-Altering Musculoskeletal Pain

### Simple Changes to Relieve Your Aching Body

At least **31 million Americans** experience musculoskeletal (muscles and bones) pain. With those statistics, you may be among the suffering. If so, read on to learn how to manage (or eliminate) your pain with sensible lifestyle changes.

#### Change Your Shoes

Wearing the right shoes is essential if you suffer from musculoskeletal pain. Your spine, hips and feet are adversely affected when shoes don't have proper support. Wearing high-heel shoes can also cause leg and back pain. To balance properly, high-heel shoes cause you to arch your back when walking, adding to musculoskeletal pain and sometimes affecting the bones in your feet and ankles.



#### Get a Good Night's Sleep

Your mattress may be the cause of your pain.

The Sleep Foundation published a guide explaining why people experience pain in bed, which types of mattresses are best and how to pick the right mattress based on material and construction.



Failure to get enough sleep means your muscles won't have sufficient time to recover from the day's activities. This can lead to stiffness and back pain. Sleep deprivation means your body doesn't have the necessary time to produce essential anti-inflammatory compounds, which may make you more sensitive to pain. Researchers found that poor sleep interferes with specific brain pain centers and can change how a person perceives and reacts to discomfort.

#### Drop a Few Pounds

The spine carries the body's weight and distributes the loads encountered during rest and activity. When excess weight is carried, the spine is forced to assimilate the burden, which may lead to structural compromise and damage (e.g., injury, sciatica). One region of the spine most vulnerable to obesity is the low back — the lumbar spine. Losing weight may ease the pain.

#### Move More, Feel Better

Did you know that healthy movement can reduce existing back pain? Researchers found that overweight people who increased the time they spent moving by just 20 minutes every day reduced their risk of back pain by 32%. Again, minor lifestyle changes bring about significant and positive changes.

#### Kick the Habit

Nicotine restricts blood flow to the discs that cushion your vertebrae and increases the degeneration rate. This loss of cushioning can cause back pain. Cigarette smoking also reduces calcium absorption and prevents new bone growth, leaving smokers with an increased risk for osteoporosis (brittle, fragile bones) and slower healing after bone fractures.

A Mayo Clinic study followed men with knee arthritis for up to 30 months and found current smokers had more severe pain and were more than twice as likely to have significant cartilage loss as nonsmokers.



#### Get a Massage Regularly

Did we say, "regularly scheduled massages?" Why yes, we did. Your musculoskeletal pain is a legitimate reason to schedule a gentle massage. One study found that people who had weekly back massages had less pain and disability.

#### Make Small Lifestyle Changes for Major Relief

As we've discussed in previous issues of Wellness Wednesdays, changes made to your lifestyle are helpful to your overall well-being. Chronic musculoskeletal pain can be costly, depressing and debilitating. Seek to implement the changes we've explored. Don't hesitate to schedule an appointment with your primary care physician if your pain persists. They will take the necessary steps to determine the cause and recommend the next phase of treatment to alleviate the pain and bring the relief you need.



## Pick.



## Click.



## Enroll.

### 2023 Benefits Open Enrollment Is Coming!

October 11-31, 2022

Soon it will be time to **Pick, Click and Enroll for Employee Health Benefits**

**Open Enrollment is your annual opportunity to:**

- Review your current benefits enrollments
- Change or enroll in medical, dental, vision, a health care flexible spending account and/or a dependent day care flexible spending account in Employee Self-Service (ESS)
- Add or remove dependents
- Check the Voluntary Benefits webpage on [www.cookcountyvoluntarybenefits.com](http://www.cookcountyvoluntarybenefits.com) to make sure your enrollment is up to date
- Make sure your personal information is correct for you and your dependents (name, date of birth, Social Security number, home address) in ESS

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You may also log in to ESS from home at: <https://ccgprod.cookcountyil.gov>.

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