

END PAIN & BECOME UNSTOPPABLE

RECLAIM YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PILLS OR SURGERY



move
PHYSIO

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You've had pain for too long.

Whether it is chronic, constant or a recurring issue, it can and will have a **massive** impact on the quality of your life. The activities that you once loved to do are painful and weak or may even now seem impossible. You've been to countless providers and while some have helped a little, the pain always comes back. Maybe you have started to give up hope of ever functioning and performing the way you were once able...

This is the most common situation we work with.

I have compiled a ton of information for individuals, like you, who have fought to overcome pain and loss of function and performance. The following tips will help empower you to manage your own system **without the use of drugs or surgery** and will have you on the road to recovery. I have designed this guide to be most helpful, in the order it is presented, however, feel free to skip ahead to the parts that are most relevant to your situation right now.

Please note, anything that increases your symptoms should not be continued!

Why Current Approaches Fail

THE TRUE CAUSE

Many people have heard of the concept of compensation - a part isn't working well, so other parts chip in to help. Limping after a sprained left ankle, for example, is an easy compensation to see. Making the stride shorter from the left hip, lifting the leg higher with the knee and using the back to shift weight toward the opposite side, will all help reduce the burden on the injured ankle so it can heal. Problems occur after ankle is fully healed, yet the compensation pattern hasn't changed. The back, hip and knee continue to unload the ankle a little, which places more stress on those structures indefinitely.

Lets fast forward a few years...that same person slips and pulls a muscle in their left knee. It only hurts for a few hours, but the left hip and back still end up working a little harder to help the knee recover. A few more years...that person bends to pick up something on the floor. They twist a little...and POP, the back finally gives way, seizes up and back pain sets in.

Can you see how despite if MRIs show disk problems, this was never really a back problem?

Can you see how this problem began years before the first sign of back pain?

IT GETS COMPLICATED

The movement system (joints, muscles, nerves, etc) is not the only one that compensates in the human body. In fact, all systems of the body have the ability to compensate in one way or another.

Here's where it gets complicated...

The body is only concerned with function (not parts or the systems we have organized them into), so it will spread compensations across multiple structures and systems to allow for functioning to continue. It does this for a very long time without the person ever becoming aware.

Let's look at an example of a real case we've worked on:

A woman with left arm pain comes to see us (after 4 months of chiropractic and physical therapy). Here's what we determined:

The arm pain came from a compression at her neck...

Her neck was compressed from the esophagus being adhered to it...

Her esophagus was irritated from acid reflux...

The reflux was from a hiatal hernia (stomach gets pulled up through the diaphragm)...

The Hiatal hernia came from posturing she's been doing since an episode of severe back pain from 20 years ago...

In order to fully solve her arm pain, can you see how we had to first address the issue at her back?

In her case, after a session of Manual Therapy on her pelvis, one on her on her trunk and neck, we were able to eliminate her arm pain, AND her reflux AND get back to exercising regularly. She was also able to work with her physicians to eliminate 4 drugs she was regularly taking for pain, inflammation and for the reflux.

In our current Healthcare system, each of these symptoms were **(unsuccessfully)** treated by a different Specialist:

Arm pain (nerve) - **Neurologist** (meds prescribed)

Back/neck pain - **Orthopedic Surgeon** (meds)

Reflux - **Gastroenterologist** (meds, dietary changes)

Pelvic Issues - **Gynecologist** (med change, lifestyle change)

Posture - **Physical Therapist / Chiropractor** (stretching)

This makes some of the problems with the current approach very clear:

1. Treating symptoms **ignores the cause.**
2. Specialists only work within the “system” that they were trained in, so if a problem spans multiple systems (it always does), the problem is **never fully addressed.**
3. Majority of healthcare providers are pressed (by practice owners) to be extremely busy and don't have the time to collaborate with one another and **integrate** treatments.

NOW WHAT?

Now you understand the current limitations of the current system, but obviously you still have pain and need it gone.

More importantly, you need to get back to functioning the way your body once allowed.

Here's the plan with this guide:

The first step in feeling better is to know how to manage your current symptoms. We'll go through each of the most common conversations I have with my Clients about self-treating your own symptoms...

We will then review each of the common methods and professionals you can involve, so you can find and fix YOUR true cause.

Sound good? Let's dive in...

Managing Pain and Inflammation

ICE VS. HEAT

Managing pain and inflammation can be a key concept to recovery. Heat usually “feels good” to most people and helps with stiffness and muscle guarding, but it can increase swelling and prolong inflammation. Applying ice to the painful area can help numb the pain while reducing swelling, but is also subduing the natural healing process.

For ice, the best options are commercial gel-type cold packs or a bag of frozen peas. This will conform to the painful area and stay colder longer than an actual bag of ice.

For heat, (which tends to be helpful if you wake up stiff in the morning) always opt for moist heat, like a shower, bath or microwavable hot pack. Try to avoid plug-in heating pads as these are degrading to the skin. Get upright and moving as we'll discuss next.

Neither heat nor ice by itself, will make any tremendous changes, but can be used to enhance your abilities to move, and function.

So, try each and see which one helps you get moving better. Use sparingly (maximum of **20 mins per hour**) and only when needed.

PROGRESSIVELY UPRIGHT

Your painful area will not “toughen up” if you push through pain and discomfort. It will make matters much worse by feeding into muscular guarding and inflammation.

Instead, figure out what position makes your symptoms reduce and go away with time. When there are nerves involved and pain radiates or shoots into the arms or legs, positions that REDUCE the arm/leg symptoms are the priority. This is even true if it makes the central symptoms worse. We want the pressure OFF that nerve!

While I encourage spending as much time in an upright position as possible, if your pain acts up, get into your comfortable position and apply ice or heat as discussed above. This will control inflammation and guarding and prevent pain from becoming more chronic. As symptoms allow, increase the time you spend in an upright position to allow for you to be more productive.

PLEASE RESPECT THE SYMPTOMS!

Enhanced Healing

SLEEP WELL

If you are NOT sleeping well, you are NOT healing.

Back sleepers: You only need a little head/neck support, but will need several pillows under the legs and knees. For your head pillow, use a down (not feather) pillow that is zipped up in an allergen cover. As you lay down, be sure to pull it all the way up to where your neck meets your shoulders.

Side sleepers: You'll need the amount of head and neck support to keep them in line with your spine. Again, using a down pillow that has a solid foam pillow underneath it will provide the needed support for alignment. You will also benefit from a pillow between the legs that supports the whole thigh and knee. This keep the weight of the top leg from pulling on the pelvis and spine.

Stomach sleepers: You have the most compromising position for the spine as it puts the neck in a full twist and the lower back in a deep arch. I highly recommend using a couple of solid foam pillows underneath and along one side to place your body in a slight roll to reduce the strain on the neck and back. Be sure the pillows support the abdomen, since belly-compression is usually what drives the desire for this position. Using a down or very thin pillow, you can prop your forehead so you can be in a more face-down position without squishing your nose or restricting breath. This helps to keep your neck in less of a twist.

TART CHERRY CONCENTRATE

For many people Tart Cherry concentrate is a very helpful supplement for three reasons: it helps tremendously with inflammation and with sleep AND is a very potent anti-oxidant. It has a low glycemic index, so it's safe for diabetics too.

Anti-inflammatory:

Tart cherries contain Anthocyanin, which works in the body the same way that medications like Ibuprofen or Naproxen do...except without the terrible side effects. The form of the concentrated syrup seems to preserve the maximum amount of Anthocyanin from the tart cherries.

Sleep:

Tart Cherries naturally contain Melatonin. This helps with sleep, especially if you're exposed to blue light within a couple of hours before you try to get to sleep. (most of us!)

Antioxidants:

Tart cherries contain an enormous amount of anti-oxidants. The health benefits of anti-oxidants are well documented

Instructions:

Tart cherry concentrate is a natural blood thinner, so don't use it if you're already taking anything that thins the blood...or if you're allergic to cherries. Otherwise take 1 oz of the concentrate about 45 mins before bedtime. You can take it straight or dilute it in a glass of water to fully reconstitute the juice.

MATTRESS

Mattresses can often be the cause or the solution to back pain. Knowing whether your mattress is too firm or too soft is a good start and is something you can test out yourself. Using a mattress topper, comforters, blankets, etc., create a pad on the floor. Yes the FLOOR. Sleep on that for 1 to 2 nights. Be sure to use the pillow strategies discussed above for supporting yourself down there!

Likely, you may have some bony soreness from the pressure of the floor, but if YOUR PAIN is better you need a mattress that is more FIRM than the one you currently have.

If you think your mattress is too firm... good news, you don't need to run out and buy a new one. Put on a mattress topper to soften things up and see how you feel. If it turns out you need a new mattress, you now can compare your existing make and model to what is in the showroom before making an investment. I usually recommend opting for firmer when buying new, simply because you can always add a topper to soften it while you are adjusting.

Posturing for Success

SITTING

Most of us sit... a lot. As part of your commute, your job and your relaxing time after work, sitting with poor position can be a huge factor in pain at the knees, back, shoulders and more.

Instead of military-type posturing all day (exhausting & unsuccessful), I prefer to use simple props to better align the patient's system. Back supports don't work because they directly force your spine in a position that your pelvis is fighting against. A seat wedge can be purchased at your local medical supply store (or online) for less than \$40 and can improve the position of your pelvis, which helps correct the spine on its own. If you tend to lean back in your chair, placing a fluffy pillow behind you will usually provide fuller support than the chair-back alone.

Sitting isn't as terrible for your body as many would have you believe. The real problem lies with the **prolonged periods** that we tend to spend in any position...including sitting AND standing...so, standing desks aren't really the answer. Rather, give yourself the opportunity to move regularly and you combat the adverse effects of stagnation! My advice is to set a timer to go off each hour (or less). When it goes off, drop what you're doing and move. Go for a walk, use the bathroom, get some water, wiggle, dance...whatever. Just move. Despite this seeming like it'll be disruptive to your work flow, most of my Clients report **improved productivity** after using this method.

STANDING

As described above, progressively increasing time in an upright position will help you become more productive, as long as you are respecting your symptom threshold. However, if standing continues to be symptomatic, it is sometimes helpful to address body tension.

Guarding and overactive muscles are extremely common and can actually feed into symptoms. Sometimes a helpful drill is to stand with your back fully against a wall. Use this supported position to allow your “tail” to relax, get long and drop towards the floor.

Your back and leg muscles will learn to relax a bit more each time you do this. After a few attempts at this you may find it much easier to relax in standing, even without the wall.

Activity

MOVEMENT

My company is named MOVE for a reason. Movement and pain-free exercise are a critical component to getting better. The body responds very well under appropriate stress!

If your injury is recent or easily irritated, simply laying on your back with your knees bent and letting your legs gently move side-to-side may be your starting place to ease muscle tension. As things loosen, try to isolate your pelvis and introduce movements like small circles and rocking as if to touch each number of a clock.

As with the Progressively Upright section, gradually introducing more upright, weight-bearing exercise is helpful for returning your system back to normal... as long as it does not increase symptoms!

EXERCISE

A short walk can help move fluids around, increase your metabolism and help your body heal. Avoid exercises that require end-range movement or excessively increase tension in the symptomatic area. Bracing exercises can be helpful early-on, but eventually deeper stabilization exercises are crucial to regain regular movements without guarding. As you heal and are looking for more challenge, find yourself a beginner-level yoga class. If you are already active, remember to modify or discontinue any activity or position that creates symptoms.

Contrary to popular belief, most pain is NOT due to weakness in the muscles around the affected area. The weakness comes FROM the pain, not the other way around. We often see people who have been told to “strengthen” the painful area by a doctor or therapist, but this usually only introduces more stress to a worn out group of structures. Instead, try to work on the muscles around the joints above and below the painful area. This can reduce the stress on the overworked parts!

STRETCHING

Stretching can feel good, but is highly overrated and overused in rehab. Most individuals with pain will have protective tightness and guarding, especially in the painful area. There is a very big difference between short muscles and tight muscles and many times the “tight” feeling is actually tension in a nerve. The common problem of “tight hamstrings” is usually found to be lost mobility in the Sciatic nerve, which is why so many people end up “stretching” them everyday. The most effective way to regain motion in a tight area is to use the movement and exercise principles above. Teaching the body how to control and stabilize new movements will reduce the “threat” level for an area, making it less prone to guarding. Tightness due to nerve restrictions are beyond the scope of this guide and usually require skilled manual therapy.

Similarly to exercise, focus on improving motion actively in the joints above and below your painful area. Increased mobility in these areas will relieve the burden of excessive movement elsewhere.

We All Need A Little Help Sometimes

NEEDS

While pain can be crippling, it is merely a symptom of a larger problem. Even if you've been told that you have arthritis, a herniated disc, a torn meniscus or tendinitis, these labels only describe the worn-out structure, not the reason you wore it out.

While "strengthening your core" may have been the best solution a Clinician could offer 25 years ago, nowadays a Specialist Physio can find out WHY that part has been beat up. Sometimes the hips or pelvis is to blame, other times it's the ribcage, feet, nerves or abdominal organs!

Either way, once the cause is addressed, your body will instantly feel better, stronger and more stable. This is why most of our clients report drastic changes in their symptoms after their first visit, despite previously trying months of chiropractic, acupuncture and traditional Physical Therapy.

Let's look at a few of the common approaches and discuss why they may have failed you in the past...

CHIROPRACTIC

Spinal manipulation (back cracking) can feel good temporarily and may even improve posture over time. However, repeatedly making the same joint pop can create so much motion that your muscles cannot control it properly. This can lead to more stiffness as the body attempts to keep the joints safe. The stiffness usually prompts patients to seek additional adjustments, and the cycle continues...

There is a movement within the Chiropractic profession toward exercise and restoring movement. These professionals are not looking exclusively at your posture when you are still, but assess movement, muscle quality and stability. If your Chiropractor relies on xrays and popping your back and neck, he/she is likely not part of this progressive movement.

When seeking a Chiropractor, be sure to set goals that are centered around function and independence. A healthy system does not need adjustments to stay healthy.

ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncturists use fine needles to restore balance in the body based on Eastern Medicine principles. In cases of chronic pain or a highly sensitive nervous system, I will frequently refer to an Acupuncturist to help calm the system down. This makes addressing the body's dysfunctions through Manual Therapy much easier and faster. The calming effects of Acupuncture can last several weeks, but unless the underlying mechanical issues are directly addressed the relief is usually temporary.

Many Acupuncturists are now using their skills to perform "Dry Needling" or DN. This Western-Medicine technique uses needles to directly treat trigger-points (muscle knots). DN is a very effective technique for this purpose, however it is important to understand that trigger-points always form for a reason. If that reason is not addressed, they will return.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

I am licensed as a Physical Therapist, so my views are biased a bit... however, it is important to understand which type of PT to stick with and which to run from. Consider the principles laid out in this guide.

The “No Pain No Gain” mentality doesn't work and can make things significantly worse. “Programs” are very common and involve a generic set of stretches and exercises that each patient receives, according to whatever part is affected.

When looking for a PT, be sure your treatment is unique to your needs and centers around fixing what caused your parts to wear out (it's not a weakness). Therapists that treat patients with their hands (Manual Therapists) are preferred because they can address many concerns at once and do not usually rely heavily on machines and gizmos.

If you're looking for the “Best of the Best”, look for a clinic with a Certified Functional Manual Therapist (CFMT). When one of my patients relocates beyond a 2 hour drive, I **only** refer to those with a Functional Manual Therapy background when possible. Other credentials may be helpful, but not consistently.

FINALLY...

My goal is to offer hope and information to those who have not had success within our current Healthcare system. If you have any comments or questions about the content of this guide, or need help finding a qualified Specialist please feel free to contact my office in New York and we will be glad to help.

Call or text us at (845) 810-0078 or you can email us at info@movephysio.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Sullivan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

Dr. Justin Sullivan
PT, DPT, CFMT, OCS, CSCS
Founder, CEO - MOVE PHYSIO