



Employee Benefits Newsletter

JUNE 2009

June is Pain Management Awareness Month

What is Pain?

What is pain? The word comes from the Latin "poena" meaning a fine, penalty. It is an unpleasant sensation that ranges from mild discomfort to agony. It has both emotional and physical components, the physical part comes from nerve sensation. Pain is carried by specific nerve fibers to the brain. The symptoms of pain can include: pain that does not go away as expected after an illness or injury, pain that may be described as shooting, burning, aching or electrical, or discomfort, soreness, tightness or stiffness. Pain can lead to other problems such as:

- Fatigue, which can cause impatience and a loss of motivation;
- Sleeplessness, often because the pain keeps you awake during the night;
- Withdrawal from activity and an increased need to rest;
- A weakened immune system, leading to frequent infections or illness;
- Depression, which is common and can make your pain worse;
- Other mood changes, such as hopelessness, fear, irritability, anxiety, and stress;
- Disability, which may include not being able to go to work or school or perform other daily activities.



There are two types of pain: acute pain and chronic pain. The first type of pain is acute pain (short term), which is the result of tissue damage and usually occurs after an injury or surgery and goes away once the body has gone through the normal healing process.

The second type is chronic pain (long term), this type can be the result of specific injury or an ongoing disorder. It could also occur for no apparent cause. Chronic pain often limits everyday functions and can have psychological effects on a person, they may feel anger, sadness, hopelessness and even despair. This type of pain can alter a person's personality, interfere with sleep, work and relationships.

Pain Management

Pain management is a variety of techniques used in combination over time to manage pain. When it comes to pain there are no quick fixes. Your pain might not be curable but with treatment it can be managed. The first step is patient education so that you can be involved in all the decision making on which treatment option is best for you. Pain management is important because if left untreated it could be harmful, the pain could interfere with your ability to breath, walk or move and can even cause additional complications. A person should seek pain management treatment when non specific treatments have not worked and before you experience stress from the pain.



Interventional pain management is the use of minimal invasive techniques to diagnose and treat painful conditions. This type of pain management usually uses multidisciplinary approach to provide a full range of treatment and services. The purpose of interventional pain management is to relief, reduce and improve patients' quality of life and help you return to everyday life activities.

Fatigue is often associated the chronic pain; fatigue is defined as having diminished energy. An estimated 75% of people with chronic pain report extreme fatigue as well, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome. Patients with chronic lower back and neck pain were found to experience more fatigue. Pain, mood and sleep are found to be highly associated with fatigue.

Always consult with your doctor prior to starting any type of pain management and with our health insurance carrier to verify the services are covered under group health insurance plan.