



Last Update: 28/10/2024

PN COPING STRATEGIES

Summary:

The information below has been collected from our members to be shared for the benefit of all members. It is important to understand that what may suit one member may not suit another so therefore please consult your GP or healthcare professional to determine what is right for you.

1. *Prescribed Medications (our no 1 weapon in our PN arsenal):*

- a. Opioids, Gabapentin, Paracetamol, Cannabis, Zostrix, Metformin, Lipidil Blood Pressure, Turmeric etc.
- b. Probably as important as medication itself is determining whether you need to take your medication proactively i.e. every 4 hours regardless on pain level or reactively i.e. only when pain passes a tolerable level. If you can rely on taking your medication reactively so much the better however you need to take into consideration the latency i.e. the time medication takes to kick in.
- c. Swollen feet /ankles can add considerably to your overall level of pain. Consider taking (with your doctor's ok) a diuretic (e.g., Furosemide belongs to a group of medicines called loop diuretics also known as water pills).
- d. Moisturisers e.g. Restorate Foot Cream, Accident Cream etc. Moisturising can also reduce the severity of overall pain.

2. *Distractions: (our no 2 weapon in our PN arsenal)*

Definition - Doing anything that takes your mind off the pain, 30 mins doing something is 30 mins not spent feeling pain. The more interested you are in the distraction the more effective the distraction is:

- a. The number and type of distractions is limited only by our imagination and preference.
- b. Act, Belong, Commit.
- c. Volunteer to one or more of the countless charities and support groups.
- d. Socialise and get involved with others of similar interests /purposes e.g. (but not limited to):
 - i. Beading.
 - ii. Quilting.
 - iii. Gardening.
 - iv. Clubs.
 - v. Friends.
 - vi. Jigsaw puzzles.
 - vii. Teaching /Lecturing (share your acquired knowledge with others).
- e. Play a musical instrument.

3. *Psychological (No 3 weapon in our PN arsenal):*

- a. Treat /Reward Ourselves. Something small like a cup of tea /coffee to lift our spirits or maybe a little (or big) retail therapy.
- b. We need to feel like we have adequate *control* over our situation after we are achieving points above and below in this questionnaire. If we are not feeling we have adequate *control* feelings of negativity,

anger and desperation will result, this situation can lead to devastating outcomes. If this is where you're at then there's no shame in seeking help from a certified psychologist.

4. Equipment:

- a. Footbath (iced or warm water, vibrating, water swirling action, etc.,). You can put your feet directly into the water or put your feet into a thin poly kitchen liner bag which allows most of the cold /warm to come through and with the option of wearing socks (with or without toes) to further control the amount of heat /cold the wearer feels.
Alternatively try this convenient and portable way to temporarily cool your pain.
Purchase a couple of gel packs (they're available from Woolies and sold in packs of two). Once frozen they can be placed on a suitable surface on a small hand towel or in a suitable receptacle e.g., your footbath. You don't have to add water just rest your feet on the frozen gel packs. Try not to put too much weight on the gel packs as they will split, and the gel will leak out.
- b. Use a medications container (Sun – Sat, days of the week), Webster Pack to help you to remember to take your medications.
- c. Use phone /computer apps dedicated /appropriate to your condition e.g. blood sugar monitor.
- d. Use a quality brand blood pressure monitor with an appropriate app for your mobile phone and/or computer e.g. Omron.
- e. Use a smart phone to set up alarms to remind you to take medications.
- f. ONLY AS A LAST RESORT - Mobility scooter /wheelchair, walking frame /stick, four-wheeled walker, etc. Keep in mind once you become reliant there's no going back.
- g. Bedclothes riser (to elevate bedclothes to avoid contact with feet /legs).
- h. TENS /EMS devices. Take care these devices stimulate nerves. In some cases of peripheral neuropathy your condition may be made temporarily worse by using stimulators as your condition may require relaxing not stimulating.
- i. Go to a podiatrist regularly and or use good quality foot file (not razor blade) to remove hard skin (not too much) from feet and hard skin /pressure points can increase foot discomfort.

5. Apparel:

- a. Compression socks (long, short, toeless).
- b. Comfortable shoes.
- c. Wear warm socks to bed.
- d. Wear short (summer)pyjamas as long legs rub on our ankles.

6. Exercise (Neurologists recommend PN sufferers avoid stretching exercises):

- a. Walking.
- b. Cycling.
- c. Mat exercises.
- d. Domestic duties (involving movement e.g. vacuum and mop floors etc).
- e. Shopping.

7. Meditation:

- a. Listen to recordings (purchased media, online subscriptions etc.,) or foot tapping music or just music to help you relax.

8. Family and Friends:

- a. To non-PN sufferers there are no outward signs of PN only our behaviours of how PN affects us.
Therefore, share how we are feeling as PN affects change multiple times during the day and night for the sufferer. Explain using terms to which the listener can relate e.g. PN feels like having the worst

sunburn, wearing socks made from steel wool (pot scourer) and just to round it off intermittent toothache in your feet”.

- b. Supportive partner.

9. Social:

- a. Make the effort to go out more than taking out your wheely bins.
- b. Invite friends around to your place and go to theirs.
- c. Get in the habit of staying busy.

10. Plans:

- a. Put together a plan to schedule and execute important and/or enjoyable activities. The first and foremost is your plan for effective sleep.
- b. Document “Your Daily Successes” into tables, spreadsheets, charts, notes etc. so you can easily compare your results to help direct you as well as keep you motivated.

PLEASE, things to remember and allow for:

- 1. We can consistently do the same things and take the same medications and dosage every day, but we get totally different results. Some days you almost feel like you’re cured and others you just want to call it quits.*
- 2. Remember to share your results /ideas with other members of our group by sending /giving Phil R a copy of your completed questionnaire.*