



Tips on How to Write a Pain Journal

Keeping a chronic pain journal can be extremely helpful on many levels. When you come into the office for a follow up, it can be hard to remember an overview of how your pain has been over the prior few weeks or months. A pain journal can help you to better understand your chronic pain and how well your treatment is working.

This gives you a record to look back on to notice different trends. For example, does your pain tend to flare up during a stressful life event or changes in the weather? How long does it take before your medication or injection starts to take effect? And one of the biggest overall comparisons in chronic pain management - how is my pain doing now compared to how it was before I started my treatment?

Some aspects to consider adding in a pain journal entry:

- Date and time of each entry
- Pain levels on a scale of 0-10
- Pain description
 - Ex. Sharp, dull, aching, burning
- Pain location
 - Try to be as specific as you can! Example: The left side of my low back radiating into the front of my left thigh and across my knee, but it does not go into my feet.
- Treatments
- Activity levels/exercise
- Mood/mental health
- Food/drink intake



Treatments

What have you tried to help with the pain today and how did it work? Some examples can include:

- I tried ice and it didn't make a difference, but heat seemed to help
- I tried my medication (include name of medication and dosing) and it started to help after about 20 minutes
- My relaxation techniques helped to take the edge off of the pain and take my mind off of it



Activity Levels/Exercise:

What physical movements have exacerbated or alleviated the pain? Some examples could include:

- I took the dog for a walk and I was able to go farther than usual
- I was in the car for 3 hours today and I was really uncomfortable by the end of the trip. My pain was flared up by the end of the day.

Mood/Mental Health

We know that there is typically a direct correlation between chronic pain and mood. When pain improves, mood often improves as well. The opposite is true in that aspects of mental health such as anxiety can worsen when the pain is worse. Examples of pain journal notes about mood:

- I had a stressful day at work and my pain was bothering me more since I got home.
- I have been feeling anxious lately. I have been noticing that my pain levels seem to go up when my anxiety gets worse.
- My pain has been feeling better since my injection. My spouse even mentioned that my mood has been better lately.

Food/Drink Intake

What we consume can play a part in inflammation among other aspects of our health, which can then affect chronic pain. Keeping track of the food and beverages you are having can also help you to understand the correlation between your pain and your diet.

This journal is for you and your benefit! You can use any or all the aspects listed above as part of your journal. Try to make it a part of your daily routine. It can be as simple as jotting down a few notes on a piece of paper or on your phone. There are even chronic pain journals that you can purchase to help organize these thoughts. The more that you can understand your chronic pain, the better off you will be in the long run.

“TURN YOUR WOUNDS INTO WISDOM.” – OPRAH WINFREY