

A Pain-Relief Primer

When aches don't go away, speak up.

February 16, 2006 By Kendra Lee

Is chronic pain getting you down? You're not alone. According to a University of Michigan study, black women with chronic pain suffer more physical and mental distress than their white counterparts. In addition, when black women report pain-induced distress, their complaints are less likely to receive medical attention. The problem can be attributed in part to racism—recent studies have made much of health disparities in this country—as well as the attitude that black women should “tough it out” in silence.

If you're suffering pain that won't go away, talk to your physician. Rate it on a scale of 1 to 10. Say whether the pain is interfering with your ability to walk, work or sleep or is causing depression. Decide how much pain you can tolerate while still performing your daily activities.

But if medication is required, take only the amount prescribed. A recent study found that taking more than 400 milligrams—800 for women over 53—of ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve) or 500 milligrams of acetaminophen (Tylenol) a day increased a woman's likelihood of developing high blood pressure by as much as 99%. Talk to your health care provider, and use caution when taking any medication on a regular basis.

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