

## Ways to reduce pain without medications – part 3 of a 4 part series

By Richard C. Shinaman, M.D.

In an ongoing effort for state and federal governments to limit access to opioid-containing pain relieving medications, a number of guidelines have been recently enacted that recommend that doctors prescribe less or even no pain medication. Many patients find that despite years of pain relief from pain medications, their doctors are suggesting that they stop their medication or even refuse to prescribe them anymore. Many primary care doctors have become very reluctant to prescribe any pain medication to even long-term patients.

Many patients want to know what to do and how they can treat the pain conditions that they have in light of these new recommendations and restrictions. I hope that the information provided below and in previous articles will be helpful to patients looking for ways to reduce suffering related to any number of pain related conditions.

### Number One: Change Your Diet

“We are what we eat!” My experience is that most patients underestimate how much the food and drink that is put into the body influences the level of pain that is experienced, the mood that predominates, and overall quality of sleep.

Quite a few scientific studies have shown that a number of foods increase the amount of inflammation in the body and this level of inflammation then sensitizes nerves and muscles to produce a higher level of overall pain. In addition, there is an evolving body of thought showing that pro-inflammatory foods cause our gastrointestinal tract to become “leaky” and allow environmental pathogens access to our bloodstream.

Many people over time develop dietary habits that consist of a higher than healthy percentage of sweets and rapidly absorbed carbohydrates. The beauty of dietary therapy is that with a bit of willpower everyone can do it



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**Disclaimer:** The opinions and statements above are the opinion of Richard Shinaman, MD and are not intended to diagnose or treat any patient or person with a medical condition. No person can determine what might be best for you as an individual without evaluating you and hearing your individual story. Everyone is different. Using any or all of the techniques described is done so at your own risk. You should discuss starting or stopping any treatment with your own medical provider.

and it is basically free (we have to eat anyway). Keep in mind that persistence pays off – it takes about 30 days to establish new habits but over time the body adjusts and starts to enjoy the tastes of more healthy foods.

There is ongoing debate about what the “optimal” diet may be, but what is quite clear is that trying three months of less inflammatory foods may well result in a dramatic decrease in pain, inflammatory markers, high blood pressure, and blood sugar levels.

I want people to keep in mind that adopting a “healthier” diet of any kind means using good sense about what is good for the body. Eating lots of processed foods like nutrition bars and a plate full of bacon is not likely to help you feel better. I feel quite strongly that if people would take the time and effort to change their diet that almost anyone can have less pain, a better mood, and an improved quality of sleep.

### Number Two: Injection Therapies and Innovation

Many patients feel hopeless if there is not something that can be done to help their pain. All too often patients have tried and failed a surgery that was designed to help things. It is important to know that there are a host of innovative techniques that can greatly help to diminish pain and suffering.

Modern medicine has the ability to block or deaden nerves, abolish severe soft tissue spasms, or even stimulate the spinal cord to block pain signals coming from other areas of the body. Even more recently we have developed medication infusion programs that have the ability to completely “reset” the bodies maladaptive nerve signaling pathways.

Regenerative techniques such as platelet rich plasma injection or stem cell injections have the chance to revolutionize joint and spine surgery. None of these types of therapies involve the long-term use of dependency promoting drugs and they can absolutely change a person’s long-term quality of life. Our experience is that most patients have not been offered a comprehensive set of options and have been told such things as, “There is nothing more we can do so you’ll just have to rely on pain medication for the rest of your life.”

I want to encourage you to please make sure that you have exhausted all the other options before heading down this path. Because very few doctors receive training in pain treatment during medical school or residency training, it is crucial to talk to an expert about possible options. Unfortunately, there are many providers that claim to be “the experts” in treating pain.

It is important to ensure that your doctor completed a pain medicine fellowship at an accredited top tier university program and has earned a board certification that is recognized by the American Council of Graduate Medical Education.

At the end of the day remember that “Pain may be inevitable, but suffering is optional.”

Read part 1 and 2 of this series, “Ways to reduce pain without medications,” in the Lamorinda Weekly online archives at [lamorindaweekly.com](http://lamorindaweekly.com).

### Foods that combat inflammation



Include plenty of these anti-inflammatory foods in your diet:

- tomatoes
- olive oil
- green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale, and collards
- nuts like almonds and walnuts
- fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna, and sardines
- fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, cherries, and oranges



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## ALL IN ONE DAY, ALL IN ONE PLACE—

### A New Approach to Managing Breast Cancer

By Tiffany Svahn, MD



Monica Eigelberger, MD, Christine Chung, MD, Tiffany Svahn, MD

board certified, highly trained and experienced physicians offer a multidisciplinary team approach to diagnosis and treatment planning. The benefit of multidisciplinary care is that patients receive multiple medical opinions from a group of specialists, helping them feel confident they have explored all of their options. Research shows that a multidisciplinary approach leads to better outcomes with improved quality of life and improved survival rates.

This is how our program works: in a single appointment at our breast cancer clinic, patients meet with a breast surgeon, medical oncologist, radiation oncologist, nurse navigator and patient care coordinator. After the physicians have examined each patient, they come together to discuss the best treatment options. By the end of the appointment, each patient receives a comprehensive treatment plan and a list of the next steps.

Our program will minimize the anxiety and uncertainty that patients experience while waiting days and weeks between individual appointments by reducing the time between diagnosis and treatment, resulting in the best possible outcomes for each patient.

We believe that the Women’s Cancer Center of the East Bay integrates all of the essential components necessary for a comprehensive world-class breast cancer program.

All in one day – all in one place!

Dr. Svahn is a Medical Oncologist and Breast Cancer Specialist

Dr. Eigelberger is a Breast Cancer Surgeon

Dr. Chung is a Radiation Oncologist

When a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, her life is turned upside down. Suddenly, she is consumed with the process of making appointments, getting more testing, making decisions, consulting with a variety of specialists on different days – all at different locations. She may even seek second and third opinions. This process is overwhelming and exhausting and can take weeks to months. For these reasons, our team developed a program to make the process easier for breast cancer patients.

I am excited to announce that Diablo Valley Oncology and West Coast Surgical Associates have opened the Women’s Cancer Center of the East Bay, located in our NEW Multidisciplinary Cancer Clinic in Pleasant Hill. This new program focuses on breast cancer patients and brings together physician expertise from Breast Surgery, Medical Oncology and Radiation Oncology.

Similar to Multidisciplinary Tumor Boards at academic centers, our

**WOMEN’S CANCER CENTER OF THE EAST BAY**

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~ Healthy Lifestyle ~