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Doctor Discovers Drug-Free Way to Beat Chronic Pain

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By Lynn Allison

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Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., was a young medical school student when he suddenly started feeling overwhelming exhaustion and pain.

It was something much more serious than the fatigue felt by most hard-working medical students.

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"I had contracted fibromyalgia," he says. "I had to take a year off to recover."

Fibromyalgia is a hard-to-treat illness of an unknown cause that can strike with pain so severe throughout the body that it is impossible to function. During his recovery, Dr. Teitelbaum found little help from conventional medicine. On his own, he found ways to get relief until he was able to resume his medical education and become a doctor.

"Since then, I have devoted my life to finding effective treatments for fibromyalgia and all kinds of pain," he says.

Over the years, he has developed a drug-free program with the acronym S.H.I.N.E., which stands for sleep, hormonal support, inflammation treatment, nutrition, and exercise.

"Standard pain medications cause more than 45,000 preventable deaths each year," says Dr. Teitelbaum, who wrote the best-selling book *Pain Free 1-2-3* based on his methods.

"Arthritis medications cause more than 16,500 deaths each year from bleeding ulcers, along with a massive doubling to tripling of heart attack and stroke risk. Meanwhile, more than 15,000 people a year die from overdoses of prescribed codeine medications."

Dr. Teitelbaum — medical director of the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, which has clinics nationwide — emphasizes that "pain is not your enemy," and that the causes of pain are the real culprits. Here's his S.H.I.N.E. protocol for pain relief:

Sleep is when your body's rest and repair functions are in full gear. Years ago, the average night's sleep in the United States was nine hours. Today it is less than seven. Poor sleep equals pain.

Hormone deficiencies often cause unexplained pain. An underactive thyroid, for example, can lead to physical discomfort and weight gain. If you experience chronic fatigue, achy muscles and joints, dry skin, and thinning hair, get your thyroid levels tested. If your readings are off, your doctor can help you fine-tune your thyroid levels with medication.

Natural supplements called "thyroid glandulars" that contain iodine, zinc, copper, or L-tyrosine can also help.

Inflammation resulting from too much sugar and saturated fats can lead to pain from common arthritis or tendonitis, says Dr. Teitelbaum.

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Eat more fish, like salmon or tuna, which are high in omega-3 fatty acid and reduce inflammation.

Herbal remedies willow bark, boswellia, and highly absorbed forms of curcumin have been shown in studies to be effective against arthritis without potentially deadly side effects.

Nutrition plays a crucial role in reducing pain. "The American diet is awful. About half of our calories are stripped of nutrients during food processing," says Dr. Teitelbaum, a board-certified internist. "Because of this, we are seeing obesity combined with malnutrition for the first time in human history."

"Eating more whole and raw foods can make a major difference in how we feel," he says. "Adding a good multivitamin high in B vitamins and magnesium can also make a difference."

Exercise is important because muscles are a "use it or lose it" proposition. Dr. Teitelbaum recommends a half-hour daily walk.

For tight joints, using warm compresses for 10 to 15 minutes a day can alleviate pain. Gentle stretches can also help you regain range of motion.

"Pain medications can be helpful for short-term relief, but remember that they may be toxic when used long term," says Dr. Teitelbaum.

"Go after the root cause of your pain to be safe and feel great."

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