

# Raffles HealthNews

A PUBLICATION BY *RafflesMedicalGroup*

*The Pain Issue*  
What's Your Pain?

Holistic  
Approach to  
Pain Relief

*Dangerous  
Pain Beliefs*

*Exercise  
and Pain*



*Ease  
Your Aches  
with Food*

*How to  
Describe  
Your Pain*

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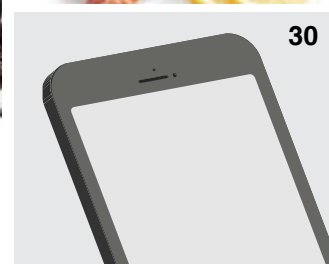
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# Hello Readers!



## Talk about Pain

Describe pain more accurately with our guide.

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## Fight Pain with Foods

Try these foods for pain relief.

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## Holistic Approach to Pain

Learn to manage pain beyond the use of drugs.

Page 32

One of the most common reasons why patients come to see me is because of pain - that distressing feeling we are all so familiar with. As much as we hate it, pain sends a clear signal to inform us that something is wrong somewhere in our body and we need to treat it.

In this issue of Health News that is focusing on pain, we discuss common pain spots and their treatment in our Cover Story (pages 10 to 13). I share how you can better describe pain to your doctors so they can diagnose more accurately (pages 16 and 17).

Learn about common misconceptions on pain (pages 14 and 15) and the fascinating world of referred pain (pages 20 and 21). Also discover supplements and foods that can help reduce pain (pages 23, 24 and 25) and inflict pain (page 28). With these, you would be able to choose your foods more wisely.

Did you know that pain can be managed through drugs (page 18), TCM (page 19) and other holistic approaches (pages 32 and 33)? In addition, we show you exercises that can help you with pain (pages 34 and 35) and how to exercise painlessly (pages 36 and 37).

Pain is real and unavoidable in life. But with this handy guide, you would be better able to manage pain, come what may.

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**Dr Melvyn Wong**  
Deputy Medical Director  
Raffles Medical



## New Docs on the Block

We welcome Dr Anthony Foo and Dr Gowreeson Thevendran to the Raffles family! With their addition, we hope to better serve your healthcare needs.



**Dr Anthony Foo**  
Specialist in Hand Surgery  
Raffles Orthopaedic Centre

Dr Foo's clinical interest spans the breadth of hand and reconstructive surgery, encompassing congenital hand conditions, trauma, flap reconstruction, small joint arthroscopy & arthroplasty, and functional reconstruction for nerve deficit.

His other areas of interest are wound management and diabetic foot reconstruction.

Prior to joining Raffles Hospital, Dr Foo was a consultant in Hand & Reconstructive Microsurgery at National University Hospital, and an Assistant Professor in Orthopaedic Surgery at the National University of Singapore.



**Dr Gowreeson Thevendran**  
Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery  
Raffles Orthopaedic Centre

Dr Gowreeson's subspecialty interests are foot and ankle surgery, trauma / fracture surgery and the treatment of lower extremity sports injuries. He is particularly skilled in minimally invasive foot and ankle surgery.

In addition to treating foot and ankle conditions, Dr Gowreeson treats ligament and cartilage injuries of the knee. He is also skilled in joint replacement surgery of the hip, knee and ankle, and performs minimally invasive fracture surgery.

Dr Gowreeson was formerly Chief of Foot & Ankle Surgery in the orthopaedics department at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), and the orthopaedic lead and assistant professor at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

## Boost Your Fertility with Evie



Raffles Fertility Centre is the first in Asia to introduce the Evie Slow Release Insemination device (Evie). Using the slow release insemination (SRI) technique, clinical trials have shown that Evie doubles the success of pregnancy when compared to standard intrauterine insemination (IUI) for women under 35 years old. It costs only a fraction of traditional in-vitro fertilisation (IVF).

Compared to traditional IUI, the slow release mechanism improves pregnancy success rates as it decreases the risks of sperm from discharging into the abdomen through the fallopian tubes and flowing back into the vagina. Evie delivers the prepared sperm into the uterus through a discreet single-use pump over a period of four hours. Worn on the thigh, you can continue to perform light duties.

"The Evie provides an exciting new alternative treatment to standard IUI. It is easy to use and is well received by patients. My patients had a great experience with Evie and I think this is a very exciting new alternative to standard IUI," said Dr Seng Shay Way, Specialist in Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Consultant, Raffles Fertility Centre.

He added: "Evie can be recommended as a first line of fertility treatment for couples who are experiencing mid fertility issues. This includes men having anti-sperm antibodies and mild male factor infertility, as well as women suffering from cervical mucus problems and endometriosis."

***Each Evie procedure costs between S\$2,700 to S\$3,500. Please call Raffles Fertility Centre at 6311 1250 to find out more.***



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## Berita Harian Seminar: Living a Joyful Life



Five of Raffles Hospital's medical experts took time off their busy schedule to share ways to live well during the Berita Harian "Living a Joyful Life" health seminar. 100 participants gathered at the SPH News Centre's Auditorium on Saturday, 6 October afternoon to learn how to manage various health conditions and issues, such as eczema, gout, handling multiple medications, finger joint conditions, as well as exercises to help relieve aches.

Participants enjoyed themselves listening to the engaging speakers, leaving feedback that it was well done and requested for more of such seminars in the future.



### Speakers for the seminar:

(Left picture from left to right)  
Rheumatologist Dr Chong Yong Yeow,  
Dermatologist Dr Tan Siew Kiang,  
Physiotherapist Ms Nur Faradyna Putri  
Kamarudin and Hand Surgeon  
Dr Anthony Foo

(Right picture) Geriatrician  
Dr Nur Farhan Alami



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**RafflesMedical**



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Looking for a new coffee spot to get your coffee fix? Treat yourself to fine Australian coffee from the Dimbulah Mountain Estate plantation.

The newest Dimbulah outlet located at level 1 of Raffles Specialist Centre offers coffee, wine and food options.

Start your day at Dimbulah with fresh croissants and breads baked on site, and finish off with an evening dinner menu and full bar service.

### Opening Hours

Mon to Fri	7am to 11pm
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Sun	8am to 9pm



## Raffles Hospital: First Trauma Accredited Private Hospital



Raffles Hospital has been accredited and certified as a trauma hospital by the National Trauma Committee on 28 June 2018. It is the first private hospital in Singapore to undergo the accreditation process.

With this accreditation, Raffles Hospital is assessed to meet national standards to manage trauma patients both locally and from the region. In addition, the 24-hour Accident and Emergency department is deemed equipped and ready to receive trauma patients and medical emergencies at any time. It has an active mechanism to activate a multi-disciplinary trauma team to manage acute trauma patients.

Supported by more than 100 specialists in Raffles Hospital, the emergency department sees both private patients as well as public patients brought in by the SCDF ambulances through the Emergency Care Collaboration scheme.



## Redefining Recuperation

With the newly added Raffles Specialist Centre, Raffles Hospital expanded with the addition of Ward 10.

Rest and recuperate in the beautifully appointed private rooms that would make you forget you are in a hospital. The private wards at level 10 of Raffles Hospital are designed for your well-being.

Ward 10 has 64 beds, of which 34 are 1-bedded rooms, 9 are junior suites and 1 presidential suite. The ward also has 2-bedded and 4-bedded rooms. Choose between private rooms and suites of varying sizes for a comfortable stay.

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- Hair dryer
- Professional laundry service

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What's

# Your Pain?

By Ashley Tuen

Are you in pain? Find out why as our medical experts share about common pain spots and what can be done to manage the pain.



## Eyes

A common condition faced by most people is dry eyes that is caused by a lack of adequate tears.

"One strategy is to remove dry eye triggers. If your workstation is facing an air conditioner or directly underneath a fan, adjust the environment so that you are not directly facing the air conditioner or the fan. Using a preservative-free ocular lubricant should also help relieve the symptoms for most patients," shared Dr Marcus Tan, Specialist in Ophthalmology and Aviation Medicine & Consultant, Raffles Eye Centre.

## Head

Two common types of recurring aches are tension headaches and migraines. Symptoms for tension headache include a dull, steady pain, and you might feel a tight band pressing around your head.

Migraines are usually felt on one side of the head with a throbbing feeling. It can be associated with nausea and light and sound sensitivity.

"Avoid situations that trigger off your headache. Have adequate sleep, exercise regularly, be hydrated and reduce stress. If headaches still occur, do take painkillers as soon as possible," advised Dr N V Ramani, Specialist in Neurology & Consultant, Raffles Neuroscience Centre.



## Jaw

Do you encounter difficulty or pain when chewing, feel an ache at your jaw or experience ringing sounds in your ear? These are signs that you may have Temporomandibular Disorders (TMD).

“There are multiple contributing factors, such as bruxism, poorly aligned teeth, stress and anxiety, and other medical conditions. Treatment methods will depend on the kind of TMD that one is suffering from, and you should seek help from a dental specialist in understanding this disorder,” explained Dr Jeffrey Sng, Specialist in Prosthodontics, Raffles Dental.



## Neck and shoulders

Muscle tightness and spasms, shoulder pain, or tingling sensations running down an arm are some common pain symptoms for the neck and shoulders. Contributing factors may include poor posture, heavy weight lifting or prolonged lowering of neck can lead to muscle strains.

“Our workstation ergonomics are important. To help reduce the pain, ensure your shoulders are square and your elbows are close to your body (within 5cm) while seated. Take micro and macro breaks so that the muscles get to rest, thus reducing the aches and pains in your neck,” advised Dr Lim Yeow Wai, Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre.



## Lower Back

Lower back aches are usually contributed by poor postures, carrying heavy loads or having repetitive stretching motions such as overhead lifting or moving bulky items. Symptoms include pain that radiates down one's leg and pain that worsens with bending, walking or even standing.

“A common misconception is that bed rest can cure a lower back ache but it can actually make it worse. Anything more than one or two days of rest can be detrimental to the recovery process. What is recommended is having short periods (eg. 30 to 45 minutes) of bed rest to reduce the pain,” explained Ms Faradyna, Senior Physiotherapist, Raffles Rehabilitation Centre.





## Wrists

There are different types of wrist pains but an ulnar wrist (pinkie-side of your wrist) pain has a wide number of possible reasons, including falls, sports injuries or occupational risks. For example, if you are using your computer mouse or keyboard in a position that causes stress, it could lead to aches due to over usage.

"Everyone has an 'ideal' position for specific activities. Keyboard warriors should invest in a comfortable full-size keyboard and mouse, while elastic wristbands are helpful for repetitive manual tasks as the mild compression helps to minimise tendon swelling and aid recovery," explains Dr Anthony Foo, Specialist in Hand Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre.



## Knees

Knee pain can be caused by problems with the knee joint itself or conditions outside the knee, mainly affecting the soft tissues.

While the pain can hinder some people with their daily activities, most cases can be managed with simple conservative measures. These include wearing a knee guard or brace, ice-packing, elevation and doing strengthening exercises, which should be guided by a physiotherapist, and avoidance of challenging activities.

## *How long has it been?*

Pain can be classified into two broad areas – acute and chronic – depending on the duration you experienced it and what caused it.

### ACUTE

A sudden pain and caused by something specific. It usually does not last longer than three months, goes away once the underlying cause disappears. After the pain is gone, the person can go on with life as usual.

Causes include surgery, childbirth, burns or cuts.

### CHRONIC

An ongoing pain that usually lasts longer than three months, and can continue even after the injury has healed. The pain signal can remain active in the nervous system for years. The person can also experience physical effects (eg. tensed muscles) and emotional effects, including depression, anxiety and anger.

This is usually linked to conditions such as headaches, back pain and arthritis.

## Ankle

Common conditions affecting the foot and ankle region may be classified as degenerative (eg. arthritis), sports injuries (eg. cartilage damage) or trauma (eg. fractures). The most common symptom is pain, followed by swelling and instability.

“The simplest conservative measures to manage the pain include avoiding trigger activities, ice-packing and elevating a swollen ankle, and strengthening exercises under a therapist’s guidance. Avoiding impact loading activities is particularly important, and wearing a supportive ankle guard may sometimes help,” shared Dr Gowreeson Thevendran, Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre.



## Heel

Most common reasons for pain in the heel are either Achilles tendinosis (pain in the back of the heel) or plantar fasciitis (pain on the undersurface of the heel). The former typically results in start-up pain, focused pain over a short segment of the Achilles tendon and pain after repetitive loading (eg. running) while the latter typically causes pain with the first step in the morning and is worse when standing after prolonged sitting.

Dr Gowreeson explains that both conditions are very responsive to physiotherapy. Achilles tendinosis is best dealt with a good customised orthotic and regular stretching while plantar fasciitis is best managed with a good heel cup in a supportive rocker soled shoe and regular calf stretches.

## Managing Post-surgery Pain

Managing and controlling your pain well can help speed up your recovery and reduce risks of post-surgery complications. Studies have also shown that poorly controlled post-surgery pain can lead to chronic pain. This is why good pain management is paramount.

Apart from the site of surgery, you may also feel muscle pain in your neck, shoulders or back that’s associated with movements.

Dr Ho Kok Yuen, Specialist in Pain Management & Clinical Director, Raffles Pain Management Centre advised that prescribed painkillers should be taken regularly and round-the-clock to reduce the pain and inflammation. Keeping pain to a minimum allows you to get out of bed early to ambulate and also to cough properly. This reduces the risks of deep vein thrombosis and pneumonia.



## Dangerous Pain Beliefs

Pain is a common sensation that we are familiar with. At the same time, it also has many myths that may deter us from dealing it the right way. Let Dr Ho Kok Yuen, Specialist in Anaesthesiology & Clinical Director, Raffles Pain Management Centre, debunk nine myths about chronic pain.

By Joanna Lee



### Myth 1

#### **Chronic pain is here to stay**

Although chronic pain persists for a long time and one may feel hopeless of overcoming it, it is not incurable. Of course, if a person has been suffering from a chronic pain for years, it is unlikely that it will be fixed within a few visits to the doctor. However, with persistence and by working closely with your doctor, it may be possible to either reduce the pain level or even eliminate chronic pain over time.



### Myth 2

#### **All chronic pain is preventable**

Unfortunately, some chronic pain is idiopathic, this means that the cause of pain is unknown. Some may be a result of an injury or an accident, or it may be due to others factors like hormonal changes. Whatever the cause, it is usually the cause that is unpreventable.



### Myth 3

#### **No pain, no gain**

This is a common phrase often heard and repeated by people who exercise regularly. Some people believe that those suffering from chronic pain just need to push themselves through it. However, pushing too hard can result in increased pain in the following days. During a chronic pain flare-up, even the slightest motion can be excruciating, let alone pushing through it. Distinctly different from muscle soreness after an exercise, chronic pain is definitely something you can disregard.





## Myth 4

### ***Pain is an inevitable part of ageing***

Chronic pain is not inevitable. Although it is normal to expect a few aches and pains as we get older, a generally healthy person should not expect to wake up every day with chronic pain. Even “wear-and-tear” types of arthritis – due to moving the same joint in the same way for many years, should receive relief after some form of activity, or using a low dose of over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine on some days.



## Myth 7

### ***It's all in the mind***

Mood disorders such as anxiety or depression can amplify the existing pain sensation, but they are definitely not the cause. Therefore, it is important to seek treatment for both physical pain and mood disorder because both physical and mental aspects of pain can form a vicious cycle.



## Myth 5

### ***Lifestyle changes will fix everything***

While this may be a popular saying, combating chronic pain will require more than lifestyle changes. The process needs to be accompanied by a careful, comprehensive treatment plan that may include other minimally-invasive treatments and a combination of over-the-counter and prescription medications, depending on the severity.



## Myth 8

### ***I will become a drug addict if I take painkillers***

Stronger painkillers such as morphine may be associated with a higher risk of dependence. However, it does not necessarily mean that you will become an addict by being on painkillers. The risk of addiction is higher if you take these painkillers even after your pain has resolved. After taking painkillers for a prolonged period of time, it is also natural to experience some form of withdrawal symptoms if you suddenly stop taking them.



## Myth 6

### ***Chronic pain can be passed onto the next generation***

Some research evidence suggests that pain tolerance or some chronic pain conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia may have a genetic link. However, there is no significant research that concludes a person with chronic pain will cause their children to live with the same pain.



## Myth 9

### ***I should stop all forms of exercise as long as I'm in pain***

Exercise as a form of physical therapy is often prescribed to manage chronic pain. It is essential to prevent deconditioning of the muscles. Depending on your condition, it is safe to exercise as long as you follow the instructions given by your doctor or physiotherapist.

# Indescribable Pain

How to describe your pain to your doctor

By Dr Melvyn Wong



***“So can you tell me a little more about the pain”***, the doctor looks away from his screen and looks at you expectantly.

***“It just hurts.. uhmmm I am not sure how to describe it”***

***“Many many pain, pain all over!”***

***“Pain is pain lah, I dunno how to say”***

These are quite common responses we doctors get when we ask a patient to describe in detail the type of pain they are having. Describing pain is essential to diagnosing a problem. You are not expected to know in detail how to articulate pain but it is essential that your doctor takes the time to ask you a series of questions to help in making an accurate diagnosis.

**Here are 12 important questions that can help you describe your pain better.**

***“Where is the pain?”***

1

This is often the first question a doctor would ask you. Where is the pain? The disease tends to be around the location of the pain but this is sometimes not the case. Referred pain can be felt in areas of the body a distance away from the source. A classic example is sciatica or a pinched nerve in the lower back due to a slipped disc.

***“Can you rate your pain on a scale of 1 to 10?”***

2

This is probably the only way that a doctor can subjectively quantify your pain apart from looking at your face and body language to tell the intensity or severity of the pain. You may be asked to rate your pain on a piece of paper with a scale of smiley to sad faces.

***“When did the pain start?”***

3

This shouldn't be difficult as you can describe it in units of time whether it was just a few minutes or hours ago for acute pain to months or even years with chronic pain.



***“Has it been there from the beginning or does it disappear at times?”***

4

Have you felt the pain since the problem started or does it tend to go away? Has the type of pain changed in terms intensity? Is it getting worse or better since day one? Describe that to the doctor.



***“What makes the pain better or worse?”***

5

These are also important questions a doctor should ask you. Does taking a medicine make the pain better? Does changing positions make it better or worse? Does lying, sitting or standing make a difference?



***“What does the pain feel like?”***

6

You can use words to describe feelings of sharpness, dullness, aching, gnawing, lancing, piercing, biting, stretching, or pulling. Your description of the pain will help the doctor narrow down his / her diagnosis.



***“Is the pain constant or does it come and go?”***

7

I tend to use a fist when describing this. If it is constant, I show a clenched fist. If it is colicky or waxing and waning, I would open and close the fist and ask if this is what the patient feels. Again knowing this would help a doctor make a diagnosis for example of back strain (constant lower back pain) from pain from kidney stones (back pain which is colicky).



***“Does the pain move around or is it localised to one location?”***

8

Radiating pain gives doctors clues to the underlying pathology. For example, pain that radiates from the neck down to the arms may be an indication of cervical spine disease. Chest pain that is central and radiates to the jaw or left arm may be an indication of angina or a heart attack.



***“How has the pain affected your life?”***

9

Your doctor may ask this question especially if you have been suffering pain for a period of time. Enquiry into how your pain affects your normal activities of daily living like dressing, bathing, walking, sleeping along with work and sports / sex life will help determine how your pain has affected your overall quality of life.



***“What medicines have you taken so far? Have you seen a doctor yet for the pain?”***

10

Let your doctor know what past medicines you have taken as it would inform your doctor what may have or have not worked in the past. Share if you have sought medical help before, what opinion the other doctors had and what investigations have been done previously. This is especially important when tackling chronic pain as your history may be complicated and any previous information would be helpful to your current physician.

***“Are there any other symptoms?”***

11

Apart from the pain, have you felt other symptoms? If you have been having abdominal pain, have you also had symptoms of nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation? If you have been having headaches, have you also been having symptoms of dizziness, double vision or blackouts? Associated symptoms may be an indication of a more serious underlying problem that needs further assessment or may point to an infection that is self-limiting like a virus.

***“What do you think is causing the pain?”***

12

I like asking this question as it is open ended, and it can unlock a patient's ideas, concerns and expectations. Follow on questioning can delve into psychosomatic issues.





# Pain & Drugs

By Dr Melvyn Wong



## ■ Anti-Spasmodics

- Treats: Relieve pain caused by smooth muscles of the gastrointestinal tracts or urinary tract
- Forms: Oral or injection
- Examples: Hyoscine
- Side effects: Drowsiness, dry mouth, blurred vision and constipation

## ■ Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDS)

- Treats: Moderate to severe pain
- Examples: Diclofenac, Ibuprofen, Naprosyn Sodium and Aspirin
- Effects: Decrease fever, reduce blood clot, reduce inflammation
- Side effects: Gastrointestinal ulcers and bleeds, kidney disease and an increased risk of heart attacks.

## ■ COX 2 Inhibitors

- Treats: Moderate to severe pain
- Examples: Arcoxia, Celebrex and Mobic
- Effects: COX 2 inhibitors - less Gastrointestinal side effects
- Side effects: Increase risk of blood clots and heart attacks when taken for long durations

**Warning: Do not to take for longer than 10 days**

## ■ Anti-convulsants / Anti-depressants

- Treats: Irritating nerve pain (eg. shingles, pinched nerve and trigeminal neuralgia)
- Examples: Pregabalin, Gabapentin and Amitriptyline

## ■ Paracetamol / Acetaminophen

- Since 1877
- Treats: Mild to moderate acute pain or a mild fever
- Forms: Oral and suppository or liquid
- Effects: Analgesic, no anti-inflammatory properties, OTC drug
- Side effects: None. Safe and effective in recommended dosages and for pregnancy
- Combine with cough and flu medications or NSAIDS and Opioids for more severe forms of pain

## ■ CORTICOSTEROIDS steroids

- Treats: Reduce pain, relieve inflammation
- Forms: Injection or tablet
- Side effects: Gastrointestinal bleeding and ulcerations, weight gain, osteoporosis, trouble sleeping and mood changes

**Warning: Strong medication, discuss with your doctor if appropriate. Stop steroids in a tailing down fashion. Not to be taken when pregnant or breast feeding**

## ■ Opioids

- Treats: Pain relief and anaesthesia
- Examples: Codeine, Morphine, Oxycodone, Fentanyl and Tramadol
- Effects: Narcotics for morphine-like effects

**Warning: Highly addictive, only by prescription**

If you suspect you might be dependent on pain medications and are unable to control the need to have them, speak to your GP.



# 4 TCM Therapies for Pain Relief

By Shermaine Lee

For thousands of years, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been employing various therapeutic methods to alleviate pain and maintain good health. It is an alternative form of drug-free pain management that focuses on restoring the flow of *Qi*, and the body's vital energy that flows through the meridian pathways.

According to TCM theory, pain arises when there is stagnation in *Qi* and blood flow. Pain relief is achieved by improving and restoring the flow of *Qi* and blood in the affected areas.

TCM Physician Tan Weii Zhu, Raffles Chinese Medicine, gives an overview of four different types of therapy techniques used in TCM for pain management.

## TCM Techniques

## What it does

## Great for



*Tui Na*, is a form of therapeutic massage that regulates the flow of *Qi* by applying pressure to specific points in the body. It involves different hand techniques such as kneading, rolling, pressing and rubbing, depending on the individual's condition and the affected areas.

Chronic muscular pain and tension



Acupuncture is the practice of inserting fine needles into particular points on the meridians so as to stimulate *Qi* and blood flow. It is minimally invasive and performed with sterile disposable needles.

Muscular pain, neurological conditions, headaches, menstrual pain and lower back pain



Commonly known as *Ba Guan*, this technique involves specially designed glass cups that are placed on specific points on the body.

In cupping, glass cups are quickly placed over a flame to create negative pressure inside. They are then positioned on certain points on the body, creating a suction effect which draws blood to the local area and helps relieve muscular tension. The cups are usually left on for five to 10 minutes. Light bruising is expected and will fade off in a few days.

This technique can be used simultaneously with acupuncture to further stimulate blood flow.

Muscular tension and pain, especially on the neck shoulders and back regions (such as those experienced by swimmers), as well as fever and colds



Also known as *Gua Sha*, scrapping uses a massage tool to scrape along the skin (usually lubricated with ointment beforehand) to relieve blood stagnation and tension. While the process can be painful at times, it encourages blood circulation and relieves muscular tension. Reddish patches known as "sha" (痧) are formed in the process that will disappear within a few days.

Fever and cold relief, muscular pain in the neck, upper back and shoulders



# REFERRED

By Magdalene Lee

Have you ever felt a pain in a part of your body but only to learn that the pain is actually due to another part of your body?

Referred pain is real and not a figment of your imagination. Every day, people experience pain felt at a site distant from source; usually from an internal organ. Due to the way the nerves in our body converge, you get referred pain.

Simply put, the sensory nerves flow into the same part of the spine that gathers nerve impulses from another part of your body so that when a pain signal comes in, it stimulates nerves further down the arm or in the neck.

Dr Wong Wei Mon, Family Physician & Consultant, Raffles Medical – Holland V, shares 12 referred pain sites you should take note of.

Seek medical attention when you experience such pain and if there is no clear cause of pain at the site.

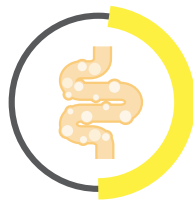


## 01

**Temporomandibular Joint (TMJ)**  
Headache

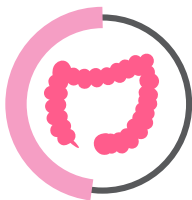
## 02

**Small Intestine**  
Sharp pain in the abdominal area near your belly button



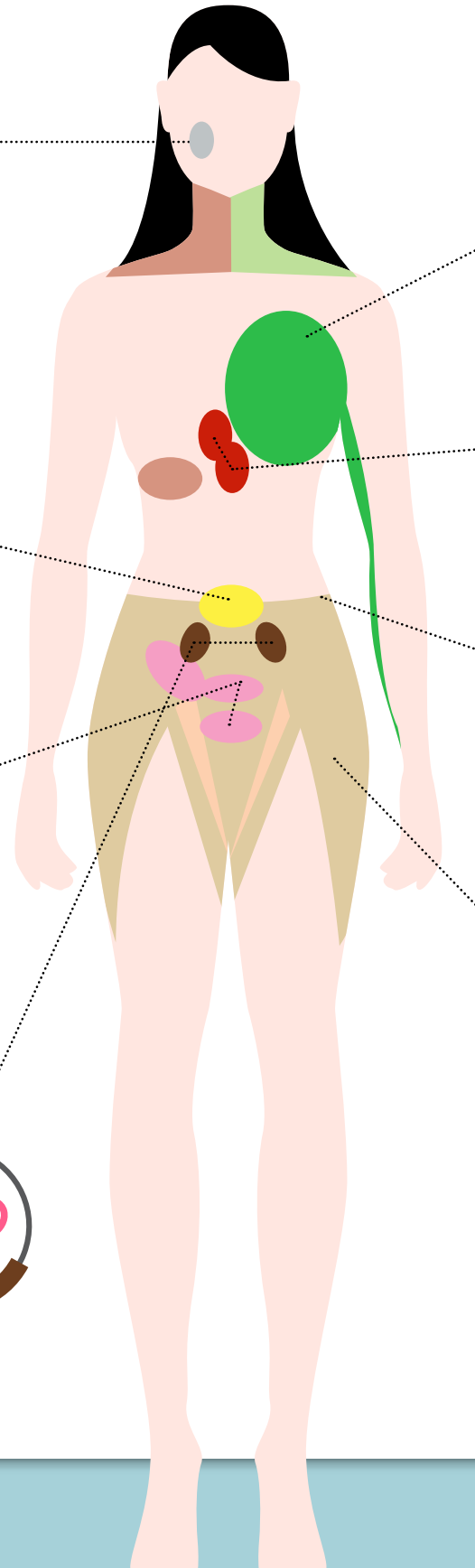
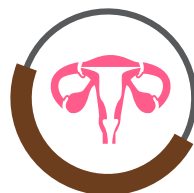
## 03

**Appendix and Colon**  
Pain on the right side of the middle-lower abdomen



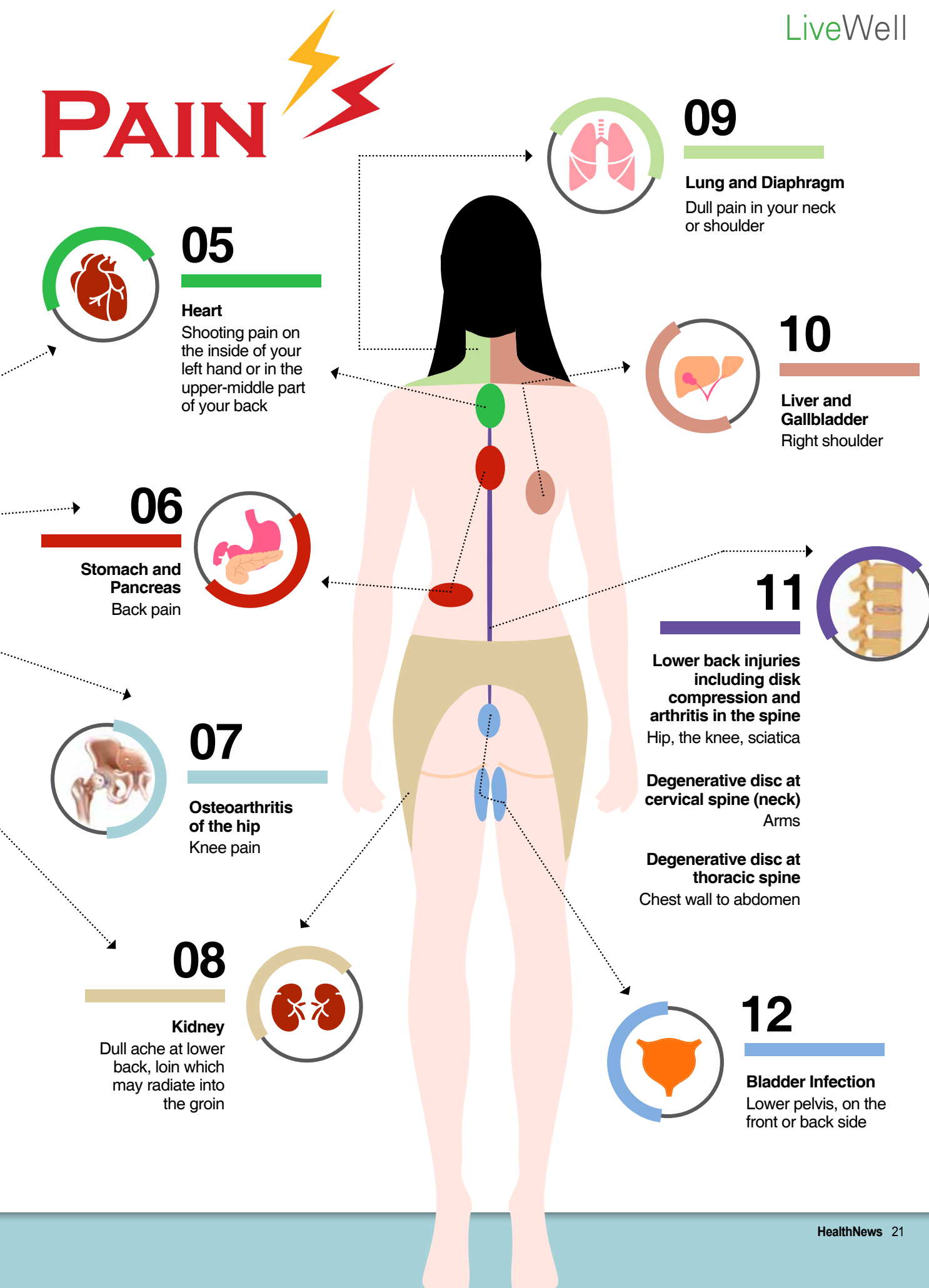
## 04

**Ovaries**  
Sharp stabbing pain in the sides of the lower abdomen





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# 6 Supplements for Pain Relief

By Shermaine Lee

People with chronic diseases often turn to painkillers for pain relief, but relying on painkillers can lead to a tolerance build up to certain drugs and even addiction. We explore natural alternatives as we speak to Ms Vanessa Png, Pharmacist, Raffles Health, to find out good supplements to stock up for persons with pain.

## Vitamin D

### HOW IT WORKS

Studies suggest that there may be promising effects of vitamin D on the management of pain in patients who are vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D has anti-inflammatory properties and supports the body's immune system.

Those who are not vitamin D deficient may still try this alternative therapy, as it is relatively safe.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Arthritis
- Chronic back pain
- Menstrual cramps
- Muscular pain



## Chondroitin

### HOW IT WORKS

Chondroitin has shown to benefit people suffering from osteoarthritis. It contains sulphuric amino acids that are crucial for increasing the cartilage molecules in the body.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Joint pain
- Osteoarthritis



## Glucosamine

### HOW IT WORKS

Did you know that glucosamine is a natural chemical compound found in the body? It helps keep the cartilage in the body healthy as glucosamine levels will begin to drop as you age, leading to the feeling of your joints 'grinding against each other'.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Joint pain
- Osteoarthritis



*This supplement is not suitable for those who have shellfish allergy.*

## Curcumin

### HOW IT WORKS

Curcumin, a main active ingredient in Turmeric, is known for its effective anti-inflammatory properties as it helps reduce irritation to body tissues that are caused by pain, swelling, redness and heat. These characteristics are commonly faced by patients with osteoarthritis.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Arthritis
- Stomach upset (dyspepsia)
- Muscle aches
- Neuropathic pain



## Green Tea

### HOW IT WORKS

Green tea, an established superfood, contains a compound that has been shown to prevent the production of molecules that can damage bones and cartilage, helping to alleviate arthritis pain.

It has also been shown to reduce inflammation and swelling associated with rheumatoid arthritis.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Rheumatoid arthritis

*May interfere with the effectiveness of some medications. Check with your doctor if this supplement is suitable for you.*

## Omega-3

### HOW IT WORKS

Apart from promoting heart health and cognitive function, omega-3 contains resolvins, a compound that helps to reduce inflammation. Commonly found in fish oils, omega-3 can be complemented with glucosamine supplement to better manage osteoarthritis.

### MAY HELP WITH

- Arthritis
- Menstrual cramps
- Inflammatory bowel disease





# Easing Your Aches with Food

By Ashley Tuen

“You are what you eat.” There’s definite truth to it! Just like some foods can cause you pain, other foods can make you feel better after consuming it. We speak with Ms Kesslyn How, Nutritionist, Raffles Diabetes and Endocrine Centre, on foods that you can consider to fight pain.

## Blueberries

Packed with lots of phytonutrients, this fruit can help fight inflammation to lessen pain. Other fruits to consider are strawberries and oranges.



## Oranges

Containing an antioxidant called beta-cryptoxanthin, oranges can help reduce the risk of anti-inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis. This compound can be found in other orange fruits and vegetables such as sweet potato.



## Red Grapes

Resveratrol – a compound found in the skin – is said to have anti-inflammatory benefits. Research showed that it can stop certain body cells from responding to the signals of inflammation that can possibly help fight pain.



## Green Leafy Vegetables

Vegetables rich in vitamin K (eg. kale and spinach) help build and strengthen bones, reducing possible risks of joint pain. Studies suggest that vitamin K destroys inflammatory cells that contribute to rheumatoid arthritis.

Eating a serving of dark green leafy vegetables every day may reduce the risk of hip fractures by 50 per cent.



## Salmon

With its anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, salmon and other oily fishes such as tuna, sardines and mackerel may help relieve joint tenderness and inflammation if you have rheumatoid arthritis. Plant-based sources include olive oil, nuts and seeds.



## Coffee

Its main ingredient – caffeine – has been suggested to reduce exercise-induced muscular injury and pain. Other research found that it can help reduce the perception of pain during a painful and exhausting task.



## Almonds

Rich in both omega-3 and magnesium, it may help in relieving muscle cramps and spasms, as well as reduce migraine headaches. Try adding cashews, flaxseeds, quinoa to your diet too.



## Turmeric Lemon Marinated Salmon (serves 2)

### Ingredients

- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- Ground black pepper for taste
- 3 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 lemon (½ squeezed; ½ sliced)
- 2 pieces of salmon fillets
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric

### Garnish

- Almonds, chopped and toasted
- Chopped parsley

### Method

1. In a bowl, whisk three tablespoons of olive oil, chopped garlic, squeezed lemon, honey, turmeric and black pepper together. Set aside. Divide the marinade into two bowls.
2. With the first marinade bowl, use a pastry brush to coat the salmon fillets. Let the marinated fillets stand for 20 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 200 degree Celsius. Line a baking sheet.
4. Lay the sliced lemons on the baking sheet followed by the marinated salmon.
5. With the second marinade bowl, pour the marinade over the salmon and bake for 12 to 15 minutes until the salmon is thoroughly cooked.
6. Remove the salmon from the oven and place on a serving plate. Garnish with toasted almond and chopped parsley.

## Pineapple

Bromelain, an enzyme found in the stem and fruit of pineapple, can be effective for reducing post-surgery bruising and swelling or post-exercise muscle soreness.



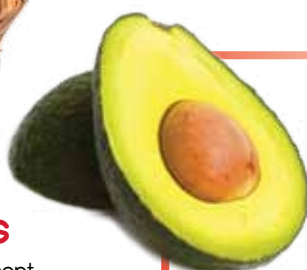
## Avocado

Rich in mono-unsaturated fats, magnesium, vitamins B and C, avocados have been proven for its anti-inflammation and antioxidant properties. Consumption of avocado can possibly reduce risk of arthritis and cardiovascular diseases.



## Tart Cherries

Cherries contain a red pigment called anthocyanin that is known to be a powerful antioxidant. Studies have shown that cherries intake is associated with lowering the risk of gout re-occurrence.



## Turmeric

You often see this spice in foods but its chemical compound, curcumin, has anti-inflammatory effects to potentially ease the pain from rheumatoid arthritis. A study also concluded that its compound is as effective as ibuprofen in fighting pain.





# *The* DRUG GURU

**Michelle Chua**

Assistant Manager,  
Support Ops, Pharmacy  
Raffles Hospital - Chongqing

**Hobbies:**

- Bake • Cook • Read
- Travel • Watch movies

Many may think that pharmacists simply dispense medications to patients and give instructions on how to use them. In fact, there are many other duties and plenty of preparation work that happens behind the pharmacy counter. I spoke to Michelle, who has been recently posted to Raffles Hospital in Chongqing to start the pharmacy department, to tell us more about her job and why she enjoys what she does. **By Joanna Lee**





At the Karst Mountains in Guilin

### I chose to work as a pharmacist because...

I am interested in the medical sciences and healthcare. In addition, pharmacy has many career opportunities and strong job security because there is a demand for pharmacists in various sectors of the healthcare industry. These include hospitals, retail pharmacies, pharmaceutical companies, academia, regulatory work and clinical drug trial management. Hospital pharmacy is an exciting area that is constantly evolving with the population's needs. Nowadays, hospital pharmacists are more involved in direct patient care. Hospital pharmacists provide advice on patients' treatment plans and help to monitor the effects that drugs have on individual patients. We are no longer just focusing on supplying drugs.

### I am motivated by...

I have the opportunity to interact and befriend colleagues from other departments in the hospital. This keeps me interested and motivated. I enjoy seeing how different disciplines work together to provide the best service to our patients. I am also extremely grateful to participate in the setting up of Raffles' first international hospital in Chongqing, China.

### A little-known fact about...

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are adept at multi-tasking. To mention

a few, we review prescriptions and dispense medications, answer drug-related enquiries and counsel patients on their medication; help establish treatment guidelines, provide advice to help design and maintain pharmacy informatics systems, and work alongside doctors and nurses to optimise the provision of pharmaceutical care to patients.

### A typical work day for me...

Begins with planning and prioritising what needs to be done for the day. Setting up the pharmacy department for the new Raffles Hospital in Chongqing involves tasks such as establishing sources for all drug supplies; recruiting pharmacists, purchasers and storekeepers; finalising department policies, preparing drug data to be uploaded into the hospital computer system and working with contractors to design the layout of the inpatient pharmacy. In addition, I also brief my staff to ensure that they understand the work processes and services that are unique to Raffles Hospital.

### The most rewarding thing about working as a pharmacist is...

Having the opportunity to learn something new every day. This gives me the chance to improve myself professionally and personally.



Enjoying yet another baking session



Posing with the finished product

### The most challenging part about my job is...

When patients or caregivers do not appreciate the importance of understanding their medication and complying with their treatment regimen. It is important for them to know the purpose of each medication that they are prescribed with, the dose and frequency to consume them, side effects to watch out for, and to be extra cautious if their medication will bring adverse effects due to interactions with certain food or other medications. This is because if the patient does not understand and follow the advice, it may result in him or her not getting well, leading to repeated visits or hospitalisation, and incurring more cost.

### Important tips that I share with patients...

*Pharmacists are one of the most accessible healthcare providers around.*

*Understanding your medications and how they work helps you to manage your medical condition better.*

*Pharmacists are always ready to help. So do approach them if you are in doubt about your medications.*

# Too Painful Not to Avoid

Ever wonder if there's food that causes you more pain than enjoyment? We share foods to avoid if you are already in pain. **By Magdalene Lee**

## 1 Red Meat

Red meat such as burgers and steaks, as well as processed meat like hot dogs and sausages are high in purines that get broken down into uric acid when ingested. Uric acid is connected to gout, an excruciatingly painful inflammation condition. In the same way, red meat is high in fats that can cause inflammation and pain. Opt for fish or chicken instead and control your total animal protein intake.



## 5 French fries and other fried foods

Fried food is high in omega-6 fatty acids; no thanks to the vegetable oil that they are cooked in. When you eat too much fried food, you affect the balance of omega-6s and omega-3s in your body leading to inflammation.

## 2 Margarine, butter, shortening, and lard

A high saturated fat diet can lead to inflammation.



## 3 Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant that can lead to poor sleep and fatigue. Instead of downing another cup of the pick me up coffee, go get some sleep. Allowing your body to rest can help combat pain better than increase the sensitivity.



## 6 Soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages

When you drink soda and other sweet drinks, the sugar causes the body to release inflammatory messengers called cytokines, leading to inflammation.



## 7 Refined carbohydrates

In a similar fashion, stay away from simple carbohydrates with refined sugar when choosing grains. Skip the white bread and pastries. Instead, opt for whole grains, including barley, buckwheat, oats, quinoa, brown rice, rye, spelt and wheat.



## 4 Beer

Beer may also increase your blood uric acid levels. Drinking two beers weekly can increase your chance of getting gout by 25 per cent. (Ref. Am J Med, 2014 Apr)

***You will notice that many of the foods that are related to inflammation are associated with chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. This is because inflammation is a key source for the development of these conditions. In addition, these foods can lead to weight gain — a risk factor for inflammation.***



# Drug-gene Testing

(Courtesy of the Mayo Clinic News Network)

**By Ashley Tuen**

Unsure of how your body reacts to medications? Wondering if a particular medicine can help you or cause you to end up in greater pain? Drug-gene testing, also known as pharmacogenomics or pharmacogenetics, studies how your genes affect your body's response to medications. A small blood or saliva sample can help determine the best medication for you.

## How does it work?

Some genes are responsible for how your body processes medications. Pharmacogenomic tests look for changes or variants in these genes that may determine if a medication could be an effective treatment, the best dose of a medication or whether you could have side effects to a specific medication.

Apart from using a pharmacogenomic test as a tool to determine the best medication for you, other factors such as age, lifestyle, other ongoing medications and overall health will also be taken into consideration.

The laboratory looks for changes or variants in one or more genes that can affect your response to certain medications.

If your pharmacogenomic test results suggests that you may not have a good response to a medication, your family members may have a similar response. You should share this information with your family members and your health care provider can also provide recommendations for family members who may benefit from undergoing the test.

## How many tests will I require?

The same specific pharmacogenomic test will need to be done only once because your genetic make-up does not change over time. But if you are taking another medication, you may need other pharmacogenomic tests as each medication is associated with a different pharmacogenomic test. Keep track of all your test results.

## Are there any limitations?

- 1) A single test is not sufficient to determine how your body responds to all medications. You may need more than a test if you are taking more than one medication.
- 2) Not all medications are available for pharmacogenomic testing.
- 3) No pharmacogenomic tests are available for aspirin and many over-the-counter painkillers.

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# Manage Your Pain Smartly

By Shermaine Lee



Chronic pain can affect anyone at any age. Sometimes it can be difficult to pinpoint the causes of pain, or predict flare-ups as there aren't many effective ways of tracking episodes of chronic pain. Though chronic pain patients are often reminded that tracking their pain is a good way to monitor their condition, it can often be hard to connect the dots between activity and / or food and chronic pain.

With modern technology, healthcare is no longer confined to the four walls of hospitals and clinics. Wearable technology, new pain trackers and pain diary apps are convenient, easy and excellent tools that can help you take charge of your chronic pain, and live a healthier life.

## Pain Trackers Apps 1

These chronic pain tracker apps are designed to help you track symptoms and create reports for your doctors. Some even have a forum feature that connects patients with chronic pain within the community for psychological and social support. Developed with the needs of today's chronic pain patients in mind, some pain tracker apps allow you to track the fluctuation or intensity of pain that is associated with the activities you do.

## Wearable Technology 2

In recent years, wearable technology is making waves in the healthcare industry as it allows you to take control of your condition and manage it via a wearable device. These devices allow you to track your fibromyalgia pain better as you focus on your activity level, pain intensity, sleep and treatments to gauge the effectiveness of the medical therapy and overall health.

## Pain Diary Apps 3

Certain pain diary apps can be customised to help you keep a medical health record, track your symptoms and triggers and share reports with your doctors, family and friends. Several pain diary apps even have integrated weather data collecting crawlers that gather your surroundings to make potential connections between your pain flare-ups and the weather.

Living healthily  
will contribute  
to better health.

Dr Chng Shih Kiat,  
Family Physician & Consultant,  
Raffles Executive Medical Centre

It is important to note that there are limitations to health apps. Not every user is literate with technology, and there is a chance that some apps may not have sufficient or updated data for certain health supplements, resulting in data being interpreted wrongly. One should always be mindful that these apps are meant as a tool to complement your health.

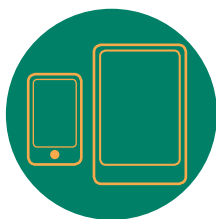




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# ATTAINING A PAIN-FREE LIFE

By Magdalene Lee

*Are you looking for a holistic and non-drug way to manage your pain? Read on!*



We know that medications may come with side effects. So, are there ways to treat pain without the use of drugs?

Enter integrative or holistic therapy. According to Dr Ho Kok Yuen, Specialist in Anaesthesiology and Clinical Director, Raffles Pain Management Centre, a holistic approach to pain has always been a cornerstone of pain management. He explains that “such an approach allows patients to take charge of their pain rather than be passive in managing it.”

As many integrative therapies often target both the mind and the body for pain relief, the whole-body approach allows us to combat the pain better.



## PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

“Multiple studies have showed that psychosocial interventions can help improve pain management and prevent development of anxiety and depression”, shared Dr Joshua Kua, Specialist in Psychiatry & Consultant, Raffles Counselling Centre.

Cognitive behaviour therapy, mindfulness, acceptance and commitment therapy, and hypnotherapy are some important components in psychosocial interventions that can help.

**Cognitive-behavioural Therapy (CBT)** is a short-term, goal-oriented psychotherapy treatment methodology to solve problems through a hands-on, practical approach. Negative cognitions and beliefs about pain can lead to maladaptive coping, exacerbation of pain, increased suffering, and greater disability. CBT works by changing the negative thoughts, beliefs and behaviours, so that the person with pain can change their awareness of pain and develop better coping skills, even if the actual level of pain stays the same.

**Mindfulness** is a psychological process to bring your attention to activities occurring in the present moment through the practice of meditation or other methodology. It seeks to increase focused attention and facilitate relaxation. As applied to pain management, a primary goal is to separate the pain sensation from unhelpful thoughts.

**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** is an acceptance and mindfulness-based intervention that teaches patients to observe and accept thoughts and feelings without judgment and without trying to change them. It focuses on identifying core values and behaving in accordance with those values.

As applied to chronic pain, ACT emphasises that while the physical sensation may be painful, the patient’s struggle with pain is what causes suffering and emotional distress. The aim of therapy, therefore, is to develop greater psychological flexibility in the presence of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours associated with pain.

**Hypnotherapy** is a form of guided hypnosis that allows you to attain a state of focus and concentration with external help from a clinical hypnotherapist. It allows you to turn your attention inwards to find and utilise strength within yourself to change your life.





## DISTRACTION THERAPY

Recent studies have shown that gaming and other forms of activities can lead to a perception of less pain. "Pain is actually felt in the brain and not in the body part where the cause might be. By distracting the mind with games, such as virtual reality or with engaging tasks that requires user attention can reduce the pain perception at the central brain level," said Dr Kua.



## EXERCISES

While similar to distraction therapy, exercise has an additional dimension to pain relief. Dr Lim Yeow Wai, Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre explained. "The most common aches and pains are usually due to weak muscles and poor postures, exercise will help strengthen the core muscles and this in turn will help maintain your posture. Regular exercise will cause your body to release endorphins, which interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain."

While doing pilates may not directly treat your pain, it quietens and relaxes your mind. At the same time as you stretch and strengthen the body, this helps you to can manage your pain better.



## SUPPLEMENTS & CREAMS

Not exactly drugs but some have reported that use of over-the-counter natural supplements and creams have helped in their pain management. Vitamin D, green tea, glucosamine, chondroitin, curcumin and omega-3 have been touted to alleviate pain. While these are mostly safe, Dr Ho advises checking with your doctor on the ingredients before starting on any. And stop if your body reacts negatively to it.



## ERGONOMICS

Another key step to pain management is pain avoidance. Dr Lim suggests that this can be done through lifestyle modification. This is where ergonomics, which seeks to eliminate sources of postural stress and strain, can help. Simple ways to do so include improving your posture, taking frequent breaks, wearing sensible shoes, and using tools such as a hands-free set to avoid contorting your body.

To add a final twist to the whole discussion, Dr Lim adds that "movement is life, and when we move our joints and body, the pain actually goes away due to the use of the joint as well as strengthening the muscle around the joint. But it is important to do the correct type of exercises especially if you have pre-existing condition". So rather than feel locked down by pain, get your body moving regularly to genuinely bid pain farewell.



## THERAPEUTIC MASSESSES

According to Dr Ho, therapeutic massages, including acupressure, can help as well. The massages seek to relax painful muscles, tendons, and joints; relieve stress and anxiety, and may even dull the pain by stimulating competing nerve fibres to hamper pain messages to and from the brain.

### Pain that can benefit from Integrative Approaches



- Back & neck pain
- Arthritis and joint pain
- Pain resulting from injury or trauma
- Post-surgery pain
- Headache
- Pelvic pain and menstrual cramps

# stretch that PAIN OUT

Spending long hours at the desk causes stiffness and pain in the neck, shoulders and back, but may not warrant a visit to the doctor's yet. If you are wondering what you can do apart from relying on medicinal patches and ointment or creams for pain relief, then let us introduce you to the wonderful world of exercise – pilates and yoga! **By Shermaine Lee**

## PILATES

Focuses on relaxing tensed muscles and strengthens the numerous muscles in the body.

Here are some stances  
you can do in the comfort  
of your home.



## Spine Stretch Forward

- Sit with your arms extended forward, and legs stretched outwards, shoulder-width apart.
- Use your core muscles to lengthen your spine and lift your chest.
- While inhaling, contract your core muscles and make a "C" with your spine.
- Maintain the "C" curve by imagining yourself rounding over a ball. Maintain your arms by extending forward.
- Continue contracting your core muscles as you bend lower. Touch your toes with fingers and feel the stretch along your back.
- Roll back up and sit up tall.
- Repeat three times.



## Neck Stretch

1. Sit upright with your legs crossed in front of you.
2. Place your left palm on the mat with your fingers, pointing towards you.
3. Sit on your hand.
4. Curve your right arm over your head and pull gently towards your right shoulder.
5. Feel the stretch along the left side of your neck.
6. Come back to the neutral position.
7. Repeat steps 2 to 4 but tilt your head 45 degrees this time, with your nose towards your armpit.
8. Breathe in and use your core muscles to deepen the stretch.
9. Release your arm and bring your head slowly back to centre.
10. Do three sets and repeat on the other side.

# YOGA

Focuses on improving the flexibility of the body, gradually increasing the flexibility of the joints.

## Warrior II



### Area of Discomfort: Knee

*(This pose helps to stretch, strengthen, and stabilise your knees)*

- Stand with your feet about four to 1.5m apart.
- Turn your right foot forward, with your left foot parallel to the back of the exercise mat. Your left leg should be pointing inwards slightly.
- Bend your right knee over your ankle (knee should not go over your toes).
- Stretch your arms apart and look forward.
- Keep your left leg straight.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds, and try building up to 60 seconds subsequently.
- Repeat on the other side.



## Cow Face Pose

### Area of Discomfort: Shoulder

*(This pose helps to ease shoulders discomfort by restoring function to the rotator cuff muscles)*

- Use a towel and hold it by the centre with your right hand.
- Lift your right hand up and drape the towel over your back.
- With your left hand, slowly reach up your back to grab the towel.
- Work your left hand up the towel until you feel a gentle stretch.
- Hold for one minute as you allow your neck and shoulders to stretch.
- Repeat on the other side.

**\* All exercises should be performed on an exercise mat for your safety.**



# Stop in the Name of Pain

**Should I avoid exercising altogether?**

By Joanna Lee

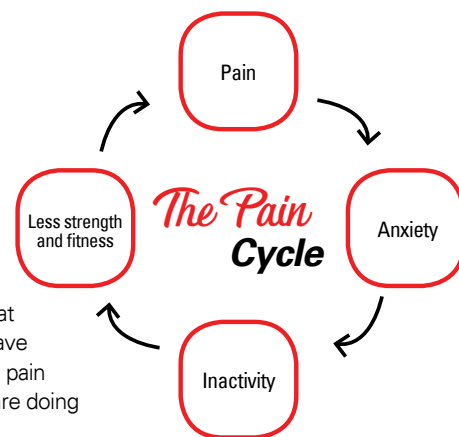


It's human nature to avoid a certain activity that led to an injury. For a short term, avoidance may promote healing, but in the long run, this fear of pain might lead to other chronic pain, and in worst-case scenarios, disability and emotional distress. If you're living with a chronic pain and unsure whether exercise can help, here is what Dr Ganesan Naidu, Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant, Raffles Orthopaedic Centre, advises.

## UNDERSTANDING THE PAIN CYCLE

"For most people living with chronic pain, "exercise" is a word that makes them feel uncomfortable or fearful. This is because they have attempted to do so but the result is an increased pain level. When pain increases, it causes them to assume that exercising and moving are doing them more harm than good," said Dr Naidu.

The pain cycle explains why people living with pain for a long time can feel paralysed by the idea of using a particular joint or muscle group again. Breaking this cycle can be difficult especially for someone who has not been exercising for a long time, as exercising can result in more pain, which can be discouraging.



## DO NOT FEAR

It is common to experience pain when starting a new exercise or sport, especially if you have not been actively moving or avoiding the idea. This is because pain has replaced the usual feeling of tightness. So, do not fear because this pain intensity reduces as you continue to exercise and become fitter over time.

## TYPES OF EXERCISES AND BENEFITS



**Endurance Exercises** such as cycling, dancing, walking, low impact aerobics and swimming help in improving your fitness, weight loss and reduce stress on joints.

**Stretching Exercises** help to reduce muscle tension and tightness, increase your overall flexibility and range of motion.



**Strengthening Exercises** such as weight bearing workouts help to strengthen your muscles, making them stronger to prevent injury and reduce stress on your joints.

## HOW TO START?

The answer is to take it step by step. Always start slow to allow your body to cope with a particular exercise before increasing the intensity gradually.

For example, you can increase your exercise duration or the number of sessions per week, or the number of repetitions that you do for a particular exercise. Once you feel stronger, you can increase the intensity. Always allocate one rest day between your exercise days. Be patient with your progress and do not rush to see results. But before that, consult your doctor or a physiotherapist on the suitable exercise or activity that will help with your condition for your own safety.

Rest days does not mean inactivity. You should still ensure that you consciously move around or do some walking at home that can help reduce pain when you are exercising.



### **Confront Your Fears**

The most effective way to break the pain cycle is to confront it and gradually increase your activity level. Be patient and don't give up.

### **Motion is Lotion**

The effects of movement helps to reduce pain overall because it keeps joints, muscles and soft tissues more flexible. And they loosen up with motion.

### **More Little, More Often**

As your body gets used to moving and doing more, it is inevitable to experience an increase in aches and pain; sometimes for even up to three or four days after exercise, but this is still acceptable. It will get easier as you persevere. It is also important to stretch before and after an exercise.

## Ask the Experts

**Q:** What's the best sleep position for back pain?



**A:** Sleeping on the back allows one's spine to be in neutral position, keeping bones, joints and discs in the spine in balance, avoiding excessive pressure on any particular area.

However, this position might not be ideal for people with sleep apnoea as the tongue may fall backwards and obstruct the airway.

**Dr Ho Kok Yuen**

Specialist in Anaesthesiology & Consultant  
Raffles Pain Management Centre

**Q:** Why do I fall when running? How can I prevent it?

**A:** Running with flat feet can cause you to over pronate, where the arches of the foot rolls inwards, leading to injuries during running.

When you have a high arch, more weight will be placed on the heel and balls of your feet. Since there are more weight on these areas, you are more likely to experience instability and pain. You can try to overcome these by finding the right running shoes.



**Dr Bernard Lin**

Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant  
Raffles Orthopaedic Centre

**Q:** How can I manage osteoarthritis (OA) pain?

**A:** While drugs can be used, physical fitness and muscle flexibility can also help reduce pain and provide stability. For patients with knee OA, quadriceps muscle strengthening, supervised exercise regimes, heat and cold therapy, walking aids can also very helpful. Other occupational therapy measures such as inserting a wedged insoles, tapping of the patella and modification of home environment to reduce use of the affected joints can help reduce the symptoms.



**Dr Chong Yong Yeow**

Specialist in Rheumatology & Consultant  
Raffles Internal Medicine Centre

**Q:** My son is 10 and often complains of back, neck and knee pain. What could be wrong?

**A:** The symptoms are rather non-specific and that he is otherwise well and very active. If so, the most common cause will be growing pains.

Growing pains can affect children between three and five years old, and between eight and 11 years old. They may continue into early adolescence or teenage years. It can be muscular pains in the legs, often the calf, front of thigh or behind knees and is often worse in the afternoon or evening. Sometimes, the pain may wake them from their sleep. The cause is not known. Growing pains are harmless and can respond to simple treatments.



**Dr David Wong**

Specialist in Orthopaedic Surgery & Consultant  
Raffles Orthopaedic Centre



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We aim to empower you with the latest health news and tips, as well as for you to learn more about the people behind Raffles. Stay connected with us on social media.



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Phew, snacking isn't always bad! According to Ms Bibi Chia, Principal Dietitian, Raffles Diabetes & Endocrine Centre. Snacking helps to keep energy levels up and hunger pangs away. Just be sure to stay away from junk food and turn to healthier options like fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds to keep your metabolism in check.



Raffles Medical Group



Did you know? Studies have shown that creating music can reduce negative feelings and impact your health positively. Listening to slow, soothing tunes is also a good way to destress. Sounds of nature can also help. So listen away but do protect your ears by limiting the amount of time used on earphones or headphones!



Twitter

@RafflesMedGrp

#Didyouknow that #menopause is defined as the absence of #menstrual #periods for 12 consecutive months? However, not all irregular periods are due to menopause. Do visit your #doctor to rule out other #disorders.



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Raffles Hospital videos.....

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You might think that all new mothers will naturally find breastfeeding a walk in the park, but do you know that there are some women who struggle to get their babies to latch properly? In this video, Ms Helen Cruz, Senior Lactation Consultant, shares with you five breastfeeding positions you can try to help find what's best for you and your baby.

We want to hear from you – tweet, like, subscribe or share a photo with us!

You can also write to us at [healthnews@rafflesmedical.com](mailto:healthnews@rafflesmedical.com) and share how we can better engage you.



Join the **Raffles Parents Support Group** for parenting tips and advice! Scan the QR code on the left to be a part of a community that wants the best for their child.

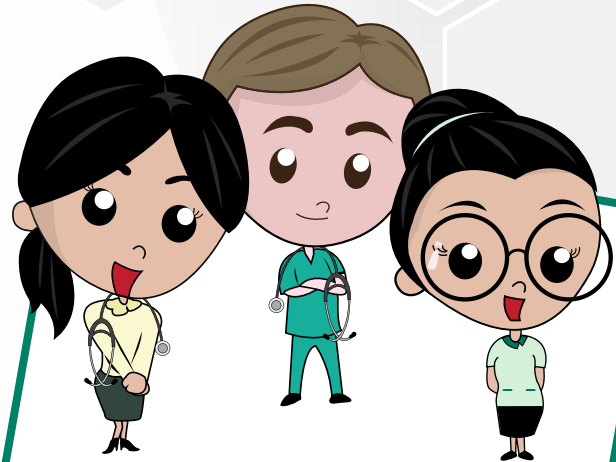
## Raffles Primary Care Network

Raffles Primary Care Network (PCN) offers a coordinated and effective team-based care to patients with chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension and hyperlipidaemia.

Here's what you need to know about Raffles PCN.



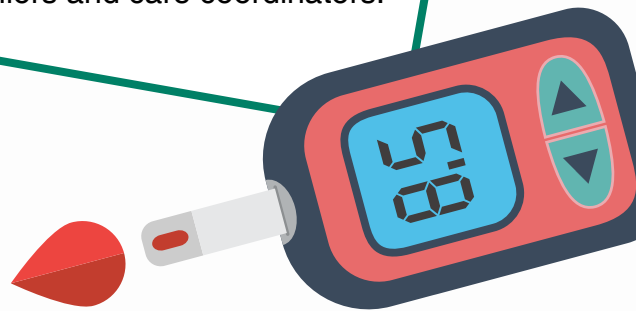
Raffles Medical PCN Clinics are **located island wide.**



We offer **holistic chronic condition management** through an integrated medical team comprising doctors, nurse counsellors and care coordinators.



**CHAS & PG subsidies** are applicable for card holders.



Ancillary services for diabetic patients, such as **diabetic foot screening** and **retinal photography**, are available.

Visit [www.rafflesmedical.com/pcn](http://www.rafflesmedical.com/pcn) or call us at **6282 4150** to find out more.



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