

Non-pharmacologic approaches to pain

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Pain is cited as the most common reason for visits to the emergency department (ED), accounting for 22% of all ED visits, a complicating factor is the concern by physicians that a number of patients are coming to the ED seeking medication for non-therapeutic purposes, as many as 20% of all ED visits are often labeled as “drug-seeking.” The purpose of this presentation is to discuss non-pharmacologic alternatives in the management of chronic pain. The development of chronic pain is described by first examining the physiology of the acute pain response and then describing how acute pain can become a chronic condition. Two pain theories will be used as a framework for discussion, the gate theory and the wind up theory both by Melzack and Wall. The gate theory is used to explain how therapies like massage and electrical stimulation can be effective. The wind up theory is helpful in explaining how acute pain can transition into a chronic condition. The role of an anti-inflammation diet is presented as a means to control pathological inflammation as well as supplements known for their anti-inflammatory properties.

Objectives:

- The learner will be able to describe the physiology of acute pain including the reflex response and the learned response.
- The learner will be able to describe the gate theory of pain and the wind up theory of chronic pain by Melzack and Wall.
- The learner will be able to describe how nutrition can be used to decrease or eliminate inflammation.
- The learner will be able to name three supplements that can be used for pain relief.

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