

OTHER WAYS TO DEAL WITH PAIN

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It can be tempting to just pop a few pills when your back starts aching or your head is throbbing.

But while pain meds can be essential, some local doctors say they are over-prescribed. Instead, they advocate drug-free alternatives and non-surgical treatments in some cases.

About one in four Americans suffers from pain, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Conquering it starts with figuring out the source, says Dr. Kevin Logan, a Northside internist.

“Pain is just a symptom of something going wrong in the body,” says Logan. “If you don’t address what is causing the pain, it’s going to come back.”

When patients come to him with pain, his goal is to use non-drug treatments to treat the root cause.

Sometimes that involves developing nutritional programs that promote wellness and help reduce inflammation, like adding salmon and eliminating tomatoes and potatoes.

Acupuncture is another effective method for neuropathic pain, he says. Among other approaches he uses: manual massage therapy, electrical stimulation and immune therapies to target and treat trigger points and inflammatory conditions in the body.

At the new Franciscan Spine Center in Beech Grove, Dr. Dan Nordmann uses non-surgical methods and the latest technologies to diagnose and treat pain.

Nordmann, the center’s medical director, often points patients to physical therapy and home exercising to alleviate their back pain. If that’s too intense at first, steroid injections or short-term medications sometimes can fend off pain long enough for a therapy or exercise program to get under way.

Sometimes, lifestyle changes are in order –weight loss, smoking cessation, diet improvements, exercise, and proper sleep. Or behavioral changes—lifting things properly, using ergonomically correct chairs—can help.

“The key is to have the patient understand the mechanisms of pain—the relationship between poor or bad habits and back pain,” says Nordmann. Then, he says, they are more likely to take steps to help themselves become pain-free.

-Barb Berggoetz