

Conservative Care – Patient

What is conservative care?

Conservative care is a category of things you can do to help relieve or manage your pain. In many cases, these treatments can help reduce the need for surgery. Includes a combination of BOTH active and inactive components. Active components are exercises you do and inactive components are things you don't necessarily do yourself.

What are the benefits of conservative care?

Conservative care may help you reduce your pain. This may, in turn, improve conditioning, decrease stress/ anxiety levels, improve posture, improve physique, develop self-help techniques and lifestyle changes, and eliminate or delay the need for surgery.

Will it relieve all my pain?

In some cases, conservative care can eliminate pain. In many cases, it helps reduce pain and helps you manage it.

Does conservative care just mean physical therapy?

No, physical therapy is just one example of conservative care. Other forms of conservative care (active and inactive) include but are not limited to:

- Active:
 - Physical therapy, chiropractic care, a physician-supervised home exercise program
- Inactive:
 - Pain management services, rest, ice, heat, modified activities, medical devices, physiatry services, acupuncture/ acupressure, weight management, stress management, biofeedback, and complementary medicine

How will these methods help?

- **Physical Therapy:** Sessions with a licensed physical therapist or therapy assistant may include exercises to improve strength, flexibility, and posture. These exercises are designed to improve posture, lessen the strain on body parts, and prevent future flairs. In addition, therapists may choose to supplement sessions with manual techniques and modalities such as electrical stimulation, traction, biofeedback, and/or thermal agents that can help reduce pain.
- **Chiropractic Care:** Treatment with a licensed chiropractor may include adjustments, active procedures, such as exercise and passive modalities. Exercises are designed to improve muscle strength, range of motion, and posture, and prevent recurrence of your condition. In addition, chiropractic treatment may include manual therapy and modalities such as electrical stimulation or ultrasound therapy that can help reduce pain.
- **Physician-Supervised Home Exercise Program:** Your physician will prescribe you a walking program, water exercises, or a series of exercises focusing on strengthening and stretching. It is recommended that you perform the exercises as prescribed by your physician. You should check in with your physician on a regular basis to review your progress and make changes accordingly. In order for a physician-supervised home exercise program to count towards the program, two conditions must be met:
 - There must be documentation of an exercise prescription and plan in the office visit notes.
 - Follow up documentation providing proof of completion of the home exercise program with the number of days per week you did the exercises should also be sent. If you could not complete the program, that needs to be documented and the reason why clearly stated.

- **Pain management:** Physicians who specialize in helping people cope with their pain by developing a treatment plan using many conservative care strategies, medications, and/or injections.
- **Physiatry:** Doctors who specialize in optimizing physical and mental body function to reduce pain and improve function. They may utilize techniques such as medications, injections, biofeedback, or bracing to help relieve symptoms.
- **Weight management:** Weight loss can result in improved posture and less stress on your body. In turn this could lead to reduced pain.
- **Stress management:** Stress and anxiety can contribute to increased pain intensity. Techniques such as meditation, imagery, self-hypnosis, breathing techniques, and/or talking to a mental health specialist have been shown to help reduce the intensity of pain.
- **Biofeedback:** This technique is used to control your body's response and to gain better awareness of its physiologic functions.
- **Complementary medicine:**
 - **Acupuncture, Acupressure:** This method uses pressure points to reduce pain and anxiety.
 - **Yoga:** A series of strengthening and stretching positions that help improve strength, reduce stress, and improve flexibility.
 - **Pilates:** Similar to yoga as it utilizes stretching and strengthening to improve strength, reduce stress, and improve flexibility.
 - **Tai Chi:** This technique uses a series of slow, deliberate, and patterned movements to help improve strength, posture, breathing, and stress relief.
 - **Herbal Supplements:** Always check with your physician before starting an herbal supplement routine.

What if one technique does not work, is there any harm in trying another?

Some conservative care techniques have no permanent effect when used alone and without lifestyle changes. However, if one method does not work it may be worth considering adding another technique in combination or in replacement of the original technique.

How do I begin a conservative care regime?

Depending on the kind of conservative care you and your doctor have chosen, you may need a prescription for certain services (like physical therapy). Other things are simple and you can begin on your own. Please consult your physician prior to beginning a conservative care and exercise regimen.

Is it covered by my insurance?

Some forms of conservative care are partially or fully covered by your insurance. Please check with your carrier prior to beginning a conservative care program.

Does Covid-19 or the global pandemic limit my ability to participate in conservative care?

No, but it may limit some of your treatment options. In-office services such as physical therapy or chiropractic care may be limited. However, there are plenty of activities that can easily be done at home. These include a physician supervised home exercise program or a telehealth session with a physician, physical therapist, or chiropractor. Many inactive components such as rest, ice, heat, medicine, stretching, etc. can easily be done at home as well.

Can age be used as a reason not to participate in a conservative care program?

No, there are many different options. You and your physician should choose the options that best suits your needs and lifestyle. Remember, to qualify for advanced imaging (CT/MRI), you need to have tried both active and inactive conservative care.