

# Conservative Care

## Information for patients

### 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. They include a combination of active and inactive components. Active components are exercises you do, while 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 include but are not limited to:

- **Active:** 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, 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 flares. 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:
  - Office visit notes must contain documentation of an exercise prescription and plan.
  - 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, with the reason 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: 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: 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 with, 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 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 suit your needs and lifestyle. Remember that to qualify for advanced imaging (CT/MRI), you need to have tried both active and inactive conservative care.

## FOR HELP...

For assistance, please contact the provider support team at:  
[radmdsupport@evolent.com](mailto:radmdsupport@evolent.com) or **1.800.327.0641**.

RadMD is available 24/7, except when maintenance is performed every third Thursday of the month from 9 p.m.–12 a.m. PST.