

Controlling Chronic Pain Levels During Seasonal Changes

Dr. Kathy Borchardt

As we head into autumn, people with chronic pain anticipate an annual experience: an increase in pain intensity.

Although the scientific relationship between weather changes and chronic pain is not fully understood, it is believed that a change in barometric pressure leads to inflammation within vulnerable spots in our bodies.

During autumn when the weather changes from warm, summery days to cold, wintery conditions, barometric pressure changes occur frequently. Chronic pain patients can learn to better control their pain experience through education regarding the way the “brain in pain” works.

Brain mapping has shown that chronic pain is not a simple road from the site of injury to one area of the brain in charge of pain perception. Over time, the experience of the same pain becomes hardwired, becoming stronger and making numerous brain connections.

In other words, the simple one-lane road becomes a super-highway to many locations. The simple sensory perception of pain from one injury becomes associated with multiple thoughts, images, sensations, memories, emotions, movements, and beliefs.

The role of behavioral medicine in chronic pain management is to assist the chronic pain patient with “shrinking” their “brain pain map” and disconnecting maladaptive brain pain networks.

This task is accomplished through utilizing relaxing, focused breathing Exercises, as well as becoming proficient in relaxation techniques, self-hypnosis, imagery, stress management, use of distractions, activity pacing and planning, managing the effects of pain medications, and improving sleep habits.

Sensory reintegration using sound, touch, and scents, and utilizing soothing techniques and emotions are also important in the management of chronic pain.

To learn how to increase your control over chronic pain, consider behavioral medicine services. For more information on pain management and other neuropsychological services, please visit my website www.kathyborchardt.com, or call my office at 630-680-5494 to schedule a consultation.

Dr. Kathy Borchardt is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice, specializing in neuropsychology and behavioral medicine. Her patient population focus includes individuals with chronic medical conditions, including chronic pain. Dr. Borchardt also works with adults and children with brain injury, learning disabilities, ADHD or Asperger’s Disorder, providing evaluations, cognitive re-training, and adjustment therapy.

KATHY BORCHARDT, PSY.D., P.C. Neuropsychologist Convenient North Naperville Location 630-680-5494

www.kathyborchardt.com
kb@kathyborchardt.com

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