Pediatric Pain & Comfort Care Program

Complementary Therapies Frequently Used for Chronic Pain Conditions

**Acupuncture:**
Acupuncture is the use of needles, pressure, or other stimulation modalities at specific points along the body to increase the body's internal sense of balance. The points are like energy generators along energy tracts called meridians in Traditional Chinese Medicine and the concept behind treatment is that the acupuncturist determines where energy is blocked or in excess and stimulate specific points, based on the diagnosis, to help energy flow more evenly throughout the body. Thanks to advances in needle and laser technology, this ancient natural healing modality can be used safely and effectively on all ages of children and adolescents. Well known for the treatment of acute and chronic pain, it is also a wonderful way to balance the body and experience a fully relaxed state.

**Art therapy:**
An interactive therapeutic process that uses art to help children with pain to take control, help foster separation and strengthen their sense of self. Through their pictures, sculptures, collages and painting, children express and project their inner images and learn about themselves.

The primary goal of art therapy is to understand the internal world of our patients. We strive to make it accessible for exploration and then search for meanings that will ameliorate physical and psychological pain and foster growth. If we are to communicate effectively with our patients, it is essential to discover a common language.

**Biofeedback:**
Biofeedback uses a computer or other feedback device to assist your child in managing symptoms by becoming aware of and learning to voluntarily control physiological changes associated with the stress response. These monitored changes may include muscle tension, skin temperature, sweat gland response, brain wave activity, or breathing rate. During a biofeedback session, a trained therapist applies electrodes or other sensors to various parts of
your child’s body. The electrodes are attached to devices that monitor your child’s responses and give him visual and/or auditory feedback. For example, he might hear tones and see colorful graphs on a monitor that display changes in his muscle tension or skin temperature. With this feedback, he can learn how to produce voluntary changes in body functions, such as lowering muscle tension and sweat gland response or raising skin temperature. These are signs of relaxation. The biofeedback therapist also will teach your child different relaxation skills such as breathing, muscle relaxation techniques, or imagery. The point of using biofeedback for chronic pain management is to help children learn to be aware of how their body reacts to different experiences and also to gain physiologic control of the branch of the nervous system that is always activated by pain or stress. Everyone who has ever been in pain knows that the more pain you have the more stress you feel. And the more stress you feel, the more pain you have. So, through biofeedback, we attempt to break the stress-pain cycle. Usually there are quick changes, but even if at first there is little change in the pain itself, as the child gains more control over his body, the pain experience also becomes more manageable.

**Cranio-Sacral Therapy:**
Cranio-Sacral Therapy (CST) is a gentle, hands-on modality that works to enhance the function of the central nervous system. Practitioners work with the facial network and spinal & cranial nerves to identify restrictions that may be causing improper pain signaling, organ dysfunction, and sensory integration issues. By addressing the central nervous system directly, CST is believed to enhance the body’s natural healing processes, dissipates negative effects of ongoing stress, and strengthens resistance to disease.

**Hypnotherapy:**
Hypnotherapy teaches the utilization of mind-body techniques, including hypnotherapy and guided imagery. I help the patient learn how to use and enhance his/her own imagination and work on strengthening the part of the brain that experiences images or sensations. In this way central pain circuits become disrupted and reprogrammed to help reduce and turn off pain. The goal of this treatment is that the patient learns how to help him/herself to heal and stay well.

**Massage Therapy:**
Massage therapy is a hands-on therapy that gently manipulates the soft tissue of the body. It can help increase systemic circulation and reduce muscular and connective tissue restrictions, increase flexibility and range of motion, in addition to providing pain relief and deep relaxation.
**Mindfulness Meditation:**
Mindful awareness can be defined as paying attention to present moment experiences with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to be with what is. It is an excellent antidote to the stresses of modern times. It invites us to stop, breathe, observe, and connect with one’s inner experience. There are many ways to bring mindfulness into one’s life, such as meditation, yoga, art, or time in nature. Mindfulness can be trained systematically, and can be implemented in daily life, by people of any age, profession or background.

**Music Therapy:**
Music therapy sessions emphasize learning breathing and vocalizing techniques for relaxation; improvisation, songwriting and music recording for self-expression. No music experience is necessary. It also combines traditional counseling with the creative arts and guided imagery to help individual’s access and express feelings, achieve personal growth and reach deepened states of relaxation. Clients learn tools for relaxation, pain reduction and self-expression that can be applied outside of the sessions.

**Psychological therapy:**
The goal of psychological therapies is to provide an individualized psychotherapy treatment plan to help develop strategies and coping skills to decrease pain and increase a sense of control. An important goal is to improve function, help the patient manage psychological distress such as anxiety and/or depression, improve quality of life, and integrate the mind-body connection while working with our multidisciplinary pain team. They help children, teens, adults, couples and families create a balanced life between attachment (feeling connected within the family) and the freedom to explore opportunities involved in growth. In the context of the psychotherapeutic relationship, problem-solving and relationship skills are taught, patients are helped to engage in mindful awareness and relaxation, and goals are clarified so that individuals can take the necessary steps to realize them.

**Physical Therapy:**
Physical Therapy involves the assessment and management of movement dysfunction. It is the physical therapist's job to analyze the entire neurological, muscular and skeletal systems in order to provide the most effective treatment for movement dysfunction and pain. A number of modalities and techniques, including ultrasound, electrical stimulation, heat and cold, and taping
are utilized in the clinical setting. Some Physical Therapists also practice aqua therapy. The buoyancy of the water provides an excellent environment for exercise and movement retraining while minimizing joint impact and soft tissue strain. Aqua therapy has been an initial step in the rehabilitation process for patients who do not tolerate activity on dry land. The goal is to restore normal, pain-free movement and functioning.

**Yoga:**

Iyengar (also known as therapeutic) yoga is highly therapeutic and safe for people with medical conditions, including chronic pain. In therapeutic yoga, the yoga series is matched to the healthcare needs of the child and changes as the child progresses. The yoga poses are intended to correct health-related problems, both in body structure and in internal organ function. It is important that a yoga exercise program is developed by someone who knows human physiology and can tailor the yoga program to the needs of the child with chronic pain. For this reason, we suggest private lessons rather than group classes until the child is familiar with the poses and can easily do them on his own.

Iyengar Yoga is a traditional form of yoga based on the teaching of the Indian Master B.K.S Iyengar. His method of teaching is orderly and progressive, and the postures are adjusted to meet the physical conditions and needs of each student. B.K.S. Iyengar developed a method of teaching that enhances the therapeutic benefits of yoga and a way of doing yoga postures and breathing that could be adapted to students of all ages, levels of experience, and ability. His method brings awareness, circulation, strength, and flexibility to various parts of the body to maintain optimal health. Iyengar Yoga stresses precision and correct alignment in all postures and makes use of props, such as wooden blocks, belts, and blankets. With the aid of props, students who are stiff, weak, or unable to hold a yoga pose for the necessary amount of time can use physical support to get the desired result.

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