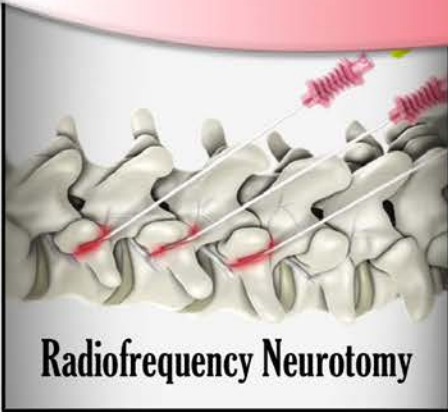


# APC NEWS



## Radiofrequency Neurotomy

### Overview

During this minimally-invasive procedure, the physician uses heat from radio waves to treat painful areas of your body, such as facet joints in your upper back, lower back or neck. This procedure is also called radiofrequency rhizotomy.

### Preparation

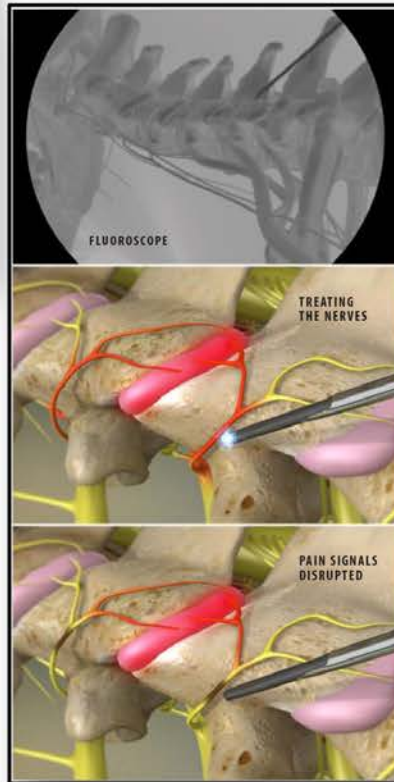
In preparation for the procedure, you lie on your stomach. You are given medicine to make you feel relaxed. The skin and tissue of your back is numbed.

### Inserting the Cannula

The physician inserts a tube called a "cannula." A video x-ray device called a "fluoroscope" helps guide the cannula to the medial branch nerves in your spine. These tiny nerves carry pain signals from your facet joints to your brain.

### Treating the Nerves

The physician inserts an electrode through the cannula. A weak electric jolt is used to test its position. If the jolt recreates the pain but does not cause any other muscular effects, it is positioned correctly. Then the physician uses the electrode to heat the nerve. This disrupts its ability to transmit pain signals. Several nerves may be treated if necessary.



### End of Procedure

When the procedure is complete, the electrode and cannula are removed. A small bandage is placed on your skin. You will be monitored for a brief time before you are allowed to go home. Your injection site may feel sore after the procedure, and you may still have back pain. If the correct nerves were treated, you will gradually experience pain relief as you heal. This may take several weeks. Your relief may last for several months or even years.

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## In This Issue

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*To discuss treatment options and learn more about our diagnostic and state-of-the-art procedures, please call Augusta Pain Center at (706) 738-PAIN and make an appointment with one of our providers. The APC Epicenter is the only one of its kind in our area, and our Board-Certified physicians are top of their field.*



## BIRTHDAYS

April: Carla Rivera 4/11  
May: Brooke Willis 5/12;  
Reven Smalls 5/28  
June: William Schiff, PsyD 6/18

## WORK ANNIVERSARIES

April: Tysheika Adams- 6 yrs; Jessica Davis- 3 yrs  
May: Vickey Partlow- 7 yrs; Wendy Carson- 3 yrs; Brooke Willis- 2 yrs  
June: Richard Epter, MD- 17 yrs; Jessica Epter- 8 yrs; Natasha Edwards- 4 yrs; Jeanine Wethal 3 yrs; Dawn Neely- 2 yrs; Jessica Lewis- 2 yrs

## APC STAFF



If you're someone that suffers from chronic pain, there may be a highly effective, medication-free option you haven't explored yet: mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) was founded back in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, and recent studies have been demonstrating just how effective MBSR can be.

In a new study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), 342 patients who suffer from chronic low-back pain were divided into two groups. One group was treated with MBSR and the other was treated with cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).

CBT patients focused on using strategies that incorporated thought and behavior modification, while MBSR used yoga and mindfulness meditation. All patients participated in weekly workshops for a total of eight weeks before continuing to practice the pain relieving strategies back home.

After all patients used their respective strategies for one year, MBSR proved to be more helpful. The CBT group results capped after 26 weeks, while the MBSR group results capped after 52 weeks.

Mindfulness is thought to be so effective on chronic pain for a number of reasons. First, mindfulness helps bring a different perspective to pain. Instead of having perpetual negative thoughts and anxiety over discomfort, mindfulness meditation allows people to study their pain with curiosity and without judgment.

It also brings a more realistic awareness to the situation, so for example, someone who may think they suffer from pain all day, may realize through mindful meditation that he or she actually feels pain only in certain circumstances, positions, or a predictable number of times a day. Being more aware of the highs and lows of pain can help people manage it.

Another way mindfulness might help with chronic pain is by helping us manage goals and expectations. When we expect pain to go away with a certain practice, exercise, or medication, and it doesn't, our brain naturally becomes alarmed and frustrated. We start to think things like "nothing ever works," "this pain is the worst," "it'll never go away." This kind of attitude actually amplifies our subjective view of our pain. This is why mindfulness, which allows us to bring more objective observation to our pain, can be so effective in reducing our own perceptions of chronic pain.

Now that you have a better understanding of how mindful meditation can help you deal with chronic pain, give the following mindful-based strategies a try for yourself:

**Body scan** – A body scan is an essential part of the MBSR practice. In a seated position with closed eyes, slowly run through every part of your body in your own mind, paying attention to each different part, starting from your feet and moving up to the top of your head. As you check in with each body part, notice the sensations that are present in each part. This will allow you to better understand where your body feels unbalanced. It will also help you keep your pain in perspective: "this is what my pain feels like right now. It may not always feel this way."

**Focus on the breath** – We often get so preoccupied with physical or even emotional pain that we neglect to give our minds and bodies a break from the experience. In a seated position with closed eyes, breathe in until you fill up every part of your lungs from bottom to top. Hold for 5 seconds, and then breath out slowly until you have completely emptied your lungs. Do this 5 times, moving slowing and paying attention to each moment of the breath. This exercise will not only calm the body and mind, but it will help you escape the ruminating thoughts you may be suffering from about your pain.

**Distractions** – Distractions come in most handy when your pain is high, especially when breathing exercises aren't working. Sometimes we need something more engaging that we can completely throw our minds into. Ideally your distraction of choice should get you into a "flow state" that allows you to forget about your own awareness entirely. Read a book, write a story, compose a song, etc. Do activities that require full attention of your thoughts and even make your forget about time itself as you're doing them. Sometimes the best way to manage your pain is simply by getting your mind off of it.

There's no medication that will eliminate chronic pain forever, so we need alternative ways to manage pain using our own minds and resources. Chronic pain can easily start to feel like it's running our lives. Mindfulness meditation can help us re-capture control of our lives.

*At the Augusta Pain Center, we offer Behavioral Health Services for our established patients and families. William S. Schiff, Psy.D. and his team are integral to our multidisciplinary pain management practice. Call APC at (706) 738-PAIN (7246) to find out more.*

# 9 Ways to Tame Your Chronic Pain



**1. Take deep breaths.** The average adult takes 8 to 16 breaths a minute. Slowing that down to 5 or 6 deep breaths that really fill your lungs will help you relax, which can lessen your discomfort.



**2. Get a good night's sleep.** Without enough rest, pain triggers may worsen. So how much sleep is enough? It varies by person, but most adults need 7 to 8 hours a night. The simple answer: however much you need to wake up rested and rejuvenated.



**3. Exercise regularly.** Get the big 3 — stretching, strengthening and aerobic activity — into your routine 3 to 5 days a week for at least 30 minutes. Stretching keeps muscles limber and tendons elongated. Strengthening core muscles in your back, pelvis, hips and abdomen aids balance and stability. Aerobic activity works the most important muscle, your heart, and stimulates circulation.



**4. Tackle your tobacco habit.** Smoking cigarettes or cigars decreases circulation, aggravates medical conditions, increases sensitivity to pain and may interfere with pain medication. Same goes for chewing tobacco.



**5. Practice "mindfulness meditation."** This involves observing your pain rather than suppressing it. It sounds crazy, but by relaxing and accepting discomfort, you may better tolerate it. So for 20 minutes a day, sit or lie in a comfortable position in a quiet spot and just be aware, moment by moment, of your breathing, the unfolding of sensations (including pain), and your thoughts and feelings.



**6. Eat a whole-food, plant-based diet.** A healthy diet promotes circulation, curbs inflammation and may soothe aching muscles and joints. Base meals on whole or minimally processed foods like vegetables, 100% whole grains, legumes and fruits. Start by ditching the worst offenders: processed meats, red meats and refined carbohydrates like sugar, white bread and pasta.



**7. Try yoga.** Yoga can quiet your breathing, reduce muscle tension and energize your body and mind, all of which can ease pain. And you don't have to be a yoga master to reap rewards. Plenty of beginner poses are found online, including the warrior pose, mountain pose, child's pose and more.



**8. Indulge your hobbies.** Take part in activities that bring you pleasure, whether gardening, fishing, cruising garage sales or carving wood. There's a hobby for everyone that can reduce stress and take one's mind off the pain.



**9. Be social.** People who interact with others tend to reduce anxiety and better manage chronic pain. So have lunch with co-workers, take on a special group project, cheer on your grandson at a soccer game or go to an arts festival.

#### Select Sources

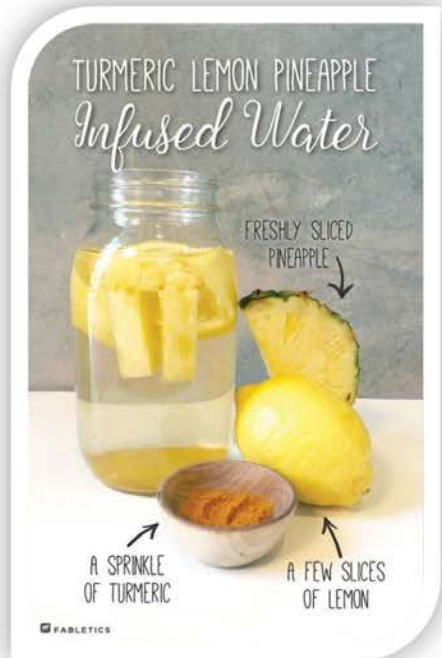
American Chronic Pain Association ([theapca.org](http://theapca.org))  
 American Psychological Association ([apa.org/helpcenter/chronic-pain.aspx](http://apa.org/helpcenter/chronic-pain.aspx))  
 UpToDate® ([uptodate.com/contents/chronic-pain-the-basics](http://uptodate.com/contents/chronic-pain-the-basics))

## DRINK

# WATER TO PREVENT PAIN

You already know that drinking water is a necessary and healthy daily habit. But do you know how much your water intake affects your joints, back and other parts of your body where you may be experiencing pain? When it comes to your joints, drinking water can reduce pain by keeping the cartilage soft and hydrated. Glucosamine helps reduce joint pain, by aiding in cartilage's absorption of water.

One major sign of dehydration is a headache. Dehydration can also cause back pain. When the discs in your spine are not properly hydrated, they cannot absorb shock as effectively. Eventually this will lead to swelling, possibly a ruptured disc and accelerated disc degeneration. Obesity and chronic pain go hand in hand. So if weight loss is on your mind, then staying hydrated is key. Drinking water can be an appetite suppressant, cleanse your body of toxins and boost your metabolism.



*Try this naturally anti-inflammatory infused water recipe to give your water a boost of flavor!*



**NURSES**  
 INSPIRE  
 INNOVATE  
 INFLUENCE

**NATIONAL NURSES WEEK 2018**  
 AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

**May 6-12, 2018**

*We love our nurses and we thank you for the care you give!*



**Richard S. Epter, MD, DABPM, FIPP**

*Medical Director*

**Nicholas A. DeAngelo, DO, DABPM**

*Physician*

**William S. Schiff, Psy. D.**

*Psychologist*

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**Hours:**

Monday - Thursday

7:00 am – 4:30 pm

Friday

8:00 am – 2:00 pm

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April 2018 Edition

[www.AugustaPainCenter.com](http://www.AugustaPainCenter.com)

## APC in the Community



In February, Youth Leadership Columbia County (led by Committee Chair and APC Marketing Director, Brooke Willis) visited the Georgia Capitol. The students observed House and Senate in session and the passing of Senate Resolution 601, recognizing and honoring Captain Reuban Black for his work on the front lines in the battle against Georgia's opioid crisis.

The group of students also had the honor of being addressed by two local Representatives and members of the House Health & Human Services Committee, Dr. Mark Newton and Jodi Lott.

*Pictured to the left are the Youth Leadership Class of 2018 and committee members with House Rep. Jodi Lott, Governor Nathan Deal and House Rep. Barry Fleming.*

APC was a sponsor of the 2018 CSRA Empty Bowl fundraiser, as well as a sponsor for the Augusta Charity Classic Golf Tournament. Both charitable events took place in March.

*Pictured to the right are Dr. Richard Epter with Deke Copenhaver, and Meryl and David Alalof with Richard and Wendy Epter at the Augusta Charity Classic.*

