

15. Is it important to be part of decisions about your pain treatment?

Pauline, 57, had lived with knee pain for several years. At first, her doctor prescribed medication, then physiotherapy, and finally suggested she might consider surgery someday. Each appointment felt quick—she listened, nodded, and followed instructions without asking much. Still, the pain kept returning, and she often wondered if the treatments matched what she actually needed.

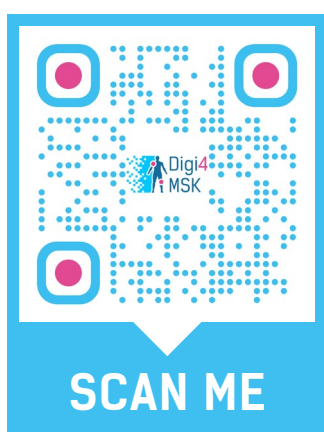
One morning, her new physiotherapist asked, *“What would you like to be able to do if your pain improved?”*, Pauline hesitated. No one had ever asked that before. *“I’d like to walk with my grandchildren without worrying about stairs”*, she said. The therapist smiled. *“Then let’s plan around that”*.

They reviewed options together—specific exercises, pacing strategies, and lifestyle changes—discussing what felt realistic for her schedule and confidence. For the first time, Pauline felt like a partner in her own care, not just a patient receiving orders.

Later, during her next doctor’s visit, she explained what was working and what she hoped to keep improving. The doctor listened and adjusted her plan accordingly. Pauline left the office lighter, realizing that treatment worked best when she was part of the decisions.

It was not about rejecting professional advice—it was about bringing her voice into the conversation.

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Skills you can build by watching the video:

- Learning how to take an active role in making decisions about your pain care.
- Understanding that your goals, preferences, and daily life matter when choosing treatments.
- Knowing how to ask questions and share opinions respectfully with healthcare professionals.
- Feeling more confident in applying information from different sources to choose what works best for you.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/svGOA-QqnwU>

15.1. How can you be an active partner in your pain treatment through shared decisions?

1. **Better consequences for you:** When you are involved in choosing your treatment, studies show you will likely feel more informed, less stressed about your choices, and ultimately more satisfied with your care.
2. **More likely to stick with it:** If you are a part of choosing your treatment plan (like an exercise program or lifestyle changes), you are more likely to understand it and stick with it. This makes it more successful in the long run.
3. **Smarter healthcare choices:** Being part of the decision can help you choose treatments that truly fit your life and values, potentially avoiding unnecessary or expensive procedures you do not really want or need.
4. **Feel more in control:** When you have a say in your health decisions, you feel more in charge of your own journey. This can make you feel more confident in managing your pain.

15.2. How can you and your healthcare professional decide together?

1. **Talk about what matters to YOU:** Your life, your goals, and your worries are very important. Tell your healthcare professional what is most important to you right now or what worries you most about these options (for example avoiding surgery, needing quick pain relief for work or wanting to keep up a hobby).
2. **Understand your options clearly:** Your healthcare professional should explain all the different ways to treat your pain—like exercises, medications, online programs, or injections. They should tell you the pros and cons for each one, using words you understand, not medical jargon.
3. **Make sure you “get it” and ask everything:** Do not be shy! Ask your healthcare professional about any information that is unclear or insufficient, but relevant to you. It is fine to take time to think, talk to family, or even get a second opinion.
4. **Choose together. No pressure:** You should feel like you have enough time to think about your choices. Your healthcare professional will not pressure you. The goal is not one “right” answer, but the **best decision for you**. Your healthcare professional's job is to guide and inform you, not to tell you what to do.



Takeaway messages:

Taking an active role in managing your musculoskeletal pain is powerful. By actively participating in choosing your treatment plan with your healthcare team, you build trust, ensure the care fits your life, and ultimately achieve better results for your health and well-being. This collaborative approach respects patient values, builds trust, and ultimately leads to more personalized and successful care journeys.

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