

***Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!***

# Living with Pain: A Journey to Wellness and Assisting Others

*With thanks to Virginia McIntyre, COPN Executive Committee member*

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### ***Fracture***

#### ***Fact:***

**One in five Canadians lives with chronic pain. It is not necessary to let chronic pain steal one's joy for life.**

*The pain that Virginia describes in her story is not directly related to osteoporosis. However, the main consequence of osteoporosis is a broken bone, and broken bones can result in acute (immediate) and chronic (long-term) pain. Virginia has learned to live a joyful and fulfilled life with chronic pain. We hope her story will help you to do so as well.*



One in five Canadians lives with chronic pain, and I am one of them.

Pain is not something I asked for; it just appeared out of nowhere and refuses to go away. I developed chronic pain in 2009 after a shoulder injury that required surgery to repair it. However, instead of relief, I was left with constant pain that made it impossible for me to work.

My journey began as a shuffle between healthcare professionals. Many did not understand or know how to treat chronic pain. The lack of knowledge in the healthcare system regarding chronic pain baffled and frustrated me.

The most challenging and frustrating part of my initial journey was that when treatments prescribed by various healthcare professionals failed to work, I had to endure their disbelief that my pain was real. This disbelief was expressed through their off-the-cuff comments or by the way they looked at me. Living in severe pain for years led to feelings of guilt, distress, anxiety and loneliness. I also developed memory loss. The pain continued to escalate to levels so high that, at times, I felt I could no longer go on. I was on a slippery slope to depression and disability.

After nearly two years of living with crippling pain, a referral to the Queen Elizabeth II

Health Sciences Centre Pain Management Unit in Halifax halted my shuffle between healthcare providers. I finally received assistance from a knowledgeable and compassionate pain physician. This was my turning point. As I sat in the pain physician's office, I was informed that I had chronic pain and that it would not go away. Acceptance didn't happen overnight, but with treatments, education and and guidance, I learned how to manage and live with persistent pain.

Attention was given to my desired outcomes, goals and, most importantly, my quality of life. Although the pain treatments did not take the pain away completely, they did reduce it. I needed to learn my new normal and how to manage my pain.

It was then that my journey started to take a swing down another more positive path, a path of wellness. Learning to self-manage my pain and to identify my triggers was a bumpy road; this road consisted of many trials and errors. My pain does not warn me when I am going to have a flare-up but with a good attitude and my personal pain self-management tool kit, I know I will get through these. I now have a healthcare team to assist me. The key players on my team are my pain physician, family physician, physiotherapist, massage therapist and me (the most valuable member). Beyond the healthcare professionals there are other valuable resources, one of which is peer support.

Persistent pain is a foreign concept to most but peer support from those with the same experience offers a unique setting for healing and management of pain because we truly understand. This understanding has motivated me to organize and facilitate a thriving Pain Self-Management Education support group in Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia.

Maintaining a positive attitude, peer support and adopting a healthy lifestyle, which includes proper nutrition, exercise, relaxation techniques, good posture and sleep habits, all assist me in keeping the pain at a bearable level. I am now able to manage my pain and balance work, family and friends but, most importantly, to live well with persistent pain.

Life did take a nasty turn when I developed chronic pain but this rocky road has led to new friendships, greater compassion for others and a better understanding of myself. I have learned how to live with daily pain and, with a fabulous care team, family and peer support, I will continue to live life to the fullest.

I was fortunate to be the recipient of a patient scholarship from the Canadian Pain Society (CPS) to attend their 2017 Annual Scientific Meeting in Halifax. During this conference, we, the patients, had the opportunity to participate in a training session on composing and sharing our personal stories. This event demonstrated to me the value of patients as partners and the importance of sharing our stories with others. Now, I share my pain story, have become a patient advisor and have the privilege to assist others as a facilitator of a Pain Self-Management Education support group.

I have been asked what motivates me. The answer is YOU: COPN members. COPN members, along with the Canadian Pain Society, have shown me the power of sharing our stories. Several COPN members have courageously shared their personal journey with osteoporosis. Your courage and your stories have inspired and motivated me and countless others. Thank you COPN members - please continue to share and contact us. We want to hear from you.

**Words to live by:**

Do not let chronic pain steal your joy for life. Pain has decided to join me in my journey and remind me of the good each day has to offer.

Did you know COPN offers peer support? Through the Coping e-newsletters and the toll-free number – 1-800-463-6842 - you can be connected to individuals who live with osteoporosis and have experienced the pain of a broken bone. The volunteers answering the 1-800 number are knowledgeable and caring individuals who understand what you are experiencing. They would be glad to hear from you and offer you help and support. To sign up for COPN go to [www.osteoporosis.ca/copn](http://www.osteoporosis.ca/copn).

### We Welcome Your Feedback

- Have a question?
- Is there an osteoporosis-related topic that you would like to see featured in the newsletter?
- Looking for a great volunteer opportunity?

Please contact us by calling Osteoporosis Canada's toll-free number **1-800-463-6842** or emailing [copn@osteoporosis.ca](mailto:copn@osteoporosis.ca).

## BONE MATTERS

Take charge of your bone health

Did you miss the last Bone Matters presentation? Not to worry – **Bone Matters: Protein for Healthy Bones** is now available in the *Bone Matters Archived Presentations* page on our website. View this presentation to learn about recommended protein intake as you age, how protein can help with bone and muscle strength to potentially help reduce the risk of fracture, and things to consider for choosing sources of protein in your diet.

[Click here](#) to visit the archives

## FUNNY BONE:

Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded.

– Yogi Berra

## PEACH, STRAWBERRY AND ALMOND MUESLI

**Preparation Time:** 10 mins

**Refrigeration Time:** 12 hrs

**Serves:** 4

**Calcium:** 302mg



This tasty and nutritious muesli recipe is perfect for fruit and yogurt lovers. Only 10 minutes to prepare, the magic happens overnight in your refrigerator, so you can wake up the next day with a protein-packed breakfast to start your day off right.

## Ingredients

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) rolled oats  
1 1/2 cups (375 mL) **plain yogurt**  
1/2 cup (125 mL) **milk**  
1/4 cup (60 mL) maple syrup  
1/4 cup (60 mL) wheat germ  
1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla extract

### **Toppings:**

2 peaches, sliced  
8 to 10 strawberries, quartered  
1/3 cup (80 mL) pumpkin seeds  
1/3 cup (80 mL) whole almonds

## Preparation

In a bowl, mix the oats, yogurt and milk together before covering and refrigerating overnight.

In the morning, add the maple syrup, wheat germ and vanilla extract to the oat mixture and stir to combine.

Garnish with peaches, strawberries, pumpkin seeds, almonds and some rolled oats.

For more information, [click here](#) to view the recipe online.