

Weather Alert!

Forecast calls for rain, snow, cold and a chance of pain

by Margy Squires



Do falling temperatures, precipitation and barometric pressure foretell an avalanche of aches and pains? Not necessarily once you know the usual suspects and how to ride out the storm.

Scientists aren't sure of the exact weather-pain connection. It's possible that low barometric pressure and drop in temperature combined with an increase in humidity are to blame. Changes to joint and muscle fluidity, scar tissue and blood flow occur. While some may question the link, a two year study in North West England that cross-checked weather patterns with a diary of self-reported pain for 2,491 subjects with chronic widespread pain found a positive correlation between the two (Alberdeen et al, 2010). The authors concluded that "quality sleep" and "exercise" were favorable factors for some, suggesting "pain is not an inevitable consequence".

Some reports suggest that when the weather turns worse, people feel gloomy and are more likely to report higher pain levels due to a change in mood. In Alberdeen's study, subjects reported less pain on sunny days but also when the temperature was warmer than 62°!

As early as 1981, fibromyalgia (FMS) doctor and researcher Mohamed Yunus reported 92% of FMS patients had increased pain when it was cold and damp. Perhaps the weather sensitivity evoked nociceptive response to heighten the now known amplified pain syndrome. Another FMS study found bad weather directly impaired functional ability (Hagglund et al, 1994). Two results from a published survey that queried 2,596 people with FMS named factors that aggravated symptoms (Bennett et al, 2007). "Weather changes" ranked 80%, with "sleeping problems" following at 79%.



Controversy does exist in other studies on people's ability to really predict weather by their pre-storm aches. Still, it's common for those with arthritic joints to "feel" a coming storm. According to *Arthritis Today*, swelling in joint fluid caused by increased barometric pressure can increase the pain of already inflamed joints. A three month study of 200 patients with osteoarthritis of the knee revealed that every 10° drop in weather produced an equivocal increase in pain (McClindon et al, 2007). Researchers for 955 rheumatoid patients found similar results on "pain and disease" such that they concluded weather as an important clinical factor: that "should be considered when evaluating rheumatic patients" (Miranda et al, 2007).



It seems pain has no geographic address either. While Arizona may be warm and dry, summer brings severe monsoons. One study of 557 chronic pain patients in California, Tennessee and Massachusetts report 60% reacted to the cold and 72% to dampness both before and during inclement weather (Jamison et al, 1995). So whether your weather alert comes from the local meteorologist or your body, here are a few ways to "batten down" before or hold up during the changes that are coming. *Take 5!*

Take 5

1 Stay Warm. Cold muscles contract to cause more pain. Dress in layers. Apply capsaicin cream to ward off chills and pain signals. An Epsom salts bath also calms and warms muscles.



2 Drink warming ginger tea or take as a supplement, which doubles as an anti-inflammatory agent. Curcumin or Fibro-Enzymes also help cool the inflammatory response.

3 Consider taking extra magnesium like Fibro-Care™ pre-and during storm days to relax muscles and "de-stress" pain signals.



4 A B-complex offers good supporting nutrients to help tone down pain-related central nervous system activity.

5 Rest well. 5-HTP and Valerian Rest ES™ both help modulate pain signals as well as help you get a good night's sleep. Valerian Rest ES™ has mild analgesic qualities for a one-two punch to pain.



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