

# Pain clinics help chronic sufferers

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a 64-year-old male, and my head has hurt for half my life. I've tried doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, chiropractors, acupuncture, biofeedback, neurologists and one dealing in neuropsychiatry, with no help from anyone. I've been on 52 different medications since 1955. If this happened to someone in your family, what advice would you give?

DEAR READER: I assume from your question that, despite your extensive exposure to the medical community, no one has diagnosed the cause of your headaches. This is curious.

I would have predicted that one of your many practitioners would have come up with the reason for your pain.

I gather that your case is as tough as they come. Therefore, if you have exhausted the doctors and their therapies, you may be left having to deal with 32 years of unexplained head pain. You could be helped by a pain clinic.

Many hospitals now offer special clinics to teach people how to live with (and control) chronic pain, using medicine, hypnosis, biofeedback and other methods. Arthritis, cancer and osteoporosis are common causes for chronic pain. Headache is one of the most troublesome forms of chronic pain, because it may start in relative-

ly young people.

Ask your family doctor to refer you to a pain clinic at a teaching hospital.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Managing Chronic Pain." Other readers who would like a copy should send \$1.25 with their name and address to P.O. Box 91369, Cleveland, OH 44101-3369. Be sure to mention the title.

DEAR DR. GOTT: Is it true that people with breathing or respiratory problems should not have blooming plants in their rooms, because the plants require oxygen? Do lighted candles have a bad effect on people with my condition?

DEAR READER: Living plants utilize carbon dioxide for photosynthesis and release oxygen as a "waste" product. Consequently, they are welcome additions to homes for biochemical, as well as aesthetic, reasons. The amount of oxygen given off by house plants is too small to raise the level of the gas in the air we breathe.

On the other hand, the amount of oxygen released into the atmosphere by free-growing plants, particularly those in the great forested areas of the globe — such as the Amazon rain forest — is very significant. This is the reason many ecologists are so concerned about man's destruction of vast wilderness tracts.

Blooming house plants are another matter. They often release air-borne pollen which, when inhaled, can wors-

en asthma and other chronic lung disorders. Therefore, physicians often prohibit blooming plants in houses populated by allergic persons. Specific advice about such house plants is best given by the patient's doctor.

Lighted candles, like any burning material, consume oxygen. However, the insignificant amounts required by burning candles do not affect people with respiratory problems.

The major concerns for patients with lung diseases are tobacco smoke, smog, wood smoke and other air pollutants, because the particulate matter in these fumes leads to further lung irritation, inflammation and spasm of bronchial passageways.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health Report "Living With Chronic Lung Disease." Other readers who would like a copy should send \$1.25 with their name and address to P.O. Box 91369, Cleveland, OH 44101-3369. Be sure to mention the title.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I'm a 19-year-old female recently diagnosed with Crohn's disease. I know what I'm not supposed to do, but I don't know much about the disease. Also, can I get pregnant and successfully carry the baby for nine months? I recently married and am thinking of my future.

DEAR READER: Crohn's disease, or regional enteritis, is a chronic inflammatory disease of the terminal small intestine and colon, causing chronic diarrhea, fever, weight loss and poor health. The cause is unknown; treatment consists of diet, antibiotics, cortisone and — if serious complications, such as abscesses, develop — surgery.

You need to have as much information as you can get about the disease. I urge you to pester your doctor until he or she answers all your questions. For example, the issue of pregnancy is of enormous importance but cannot be addressed except by a doctor who knows your case in detail.

Crohn's disease is a serious enough problem to warrant the care of a gastroenterologist. In dealing with the practical aspects of the disease (and obtaining emotional support), you may be helped by contacting the National Foundation for Ileitis and Colitis at 112 North Hamlin Ave., Park Ridge, IL 60068.

DEAR DR. GOTT: All my life, I've had a tendency toward diarrhea because of being nervous. Now that I'm in my 60s, my stools are misshaped. Is this a result of old age, or is something wrong?

DEAR READER: A change in bowel habits is something that should be brought to your doctor's attention. People who have spastic colon (irritable bowel) or other causes of loose stools when they're young may notice a gradual change toward firmness as they age. Thus, the "constipation of the elderly" may result in more normal evacuation.

Nonetheless, a change in bowel habits may also reflect disease, such as tumors or scar tissue causing partial blockage. After examining your colon and obtaining certain tests such as sigmoidoscopy, a doctor can advise you whether your bowel changes can be ignored or should be treated.

To give you more information, I am sending you a free copy of my Health

Report "Irritable Bowel Syndrome." Other readers who would like a copy should send \$1.25 with their name and address to P.O. Box 91369, Cleveland, OH 44101-3369. Be sure to mention the title.

DEAR DR. GOTT: I have a problem with my fingernails being sore whenever I don't have nail polish on them.

Along with falling eyesight and hearing, elderly people suffer yet another indignity: falling taste. This deficiency has not received the publicity and recognition it deserves.

Obviously, poor nutrition and anorexia (loss of appetite, distinguished from the emotional illness called anorexia nervosa) are caused by the same factors in the aged as in the young. Diseases and depression are common. So, too, are the side effects of many medicines. For example, drugs used for heart disease — such as digitalis — can drastically diminish appetite. Doctors often forget this (or overlook it) when attempting to improve the nutritional status of their patients.

Now, according to an article in the September 1989 issue of the medical magazine Patient Care, studies at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina have provided a physiological explanation for age-related anorexia. When elderly people say food doesn't taste as good as it used to, they're not imagining the difference: To them, it doesn't.

Experts have discovered that an average 75-year-old has about half as many taste and smell receptors as

does a 20-year-old.

Taste depends on free nerve endings (in the nose) and taste buds — called bipolar olfactory neurons — on the tongue. These receptors normally undergo a constant process of decay and regeneration. The Duke studies showed a markedly decreased turnover of receptors, causing a sensory deprivation that became worse with age.

In order to help elderly people overcome this handicap and savor food more fully, the investigators suggested the following tips to enhance enjoyment of food:

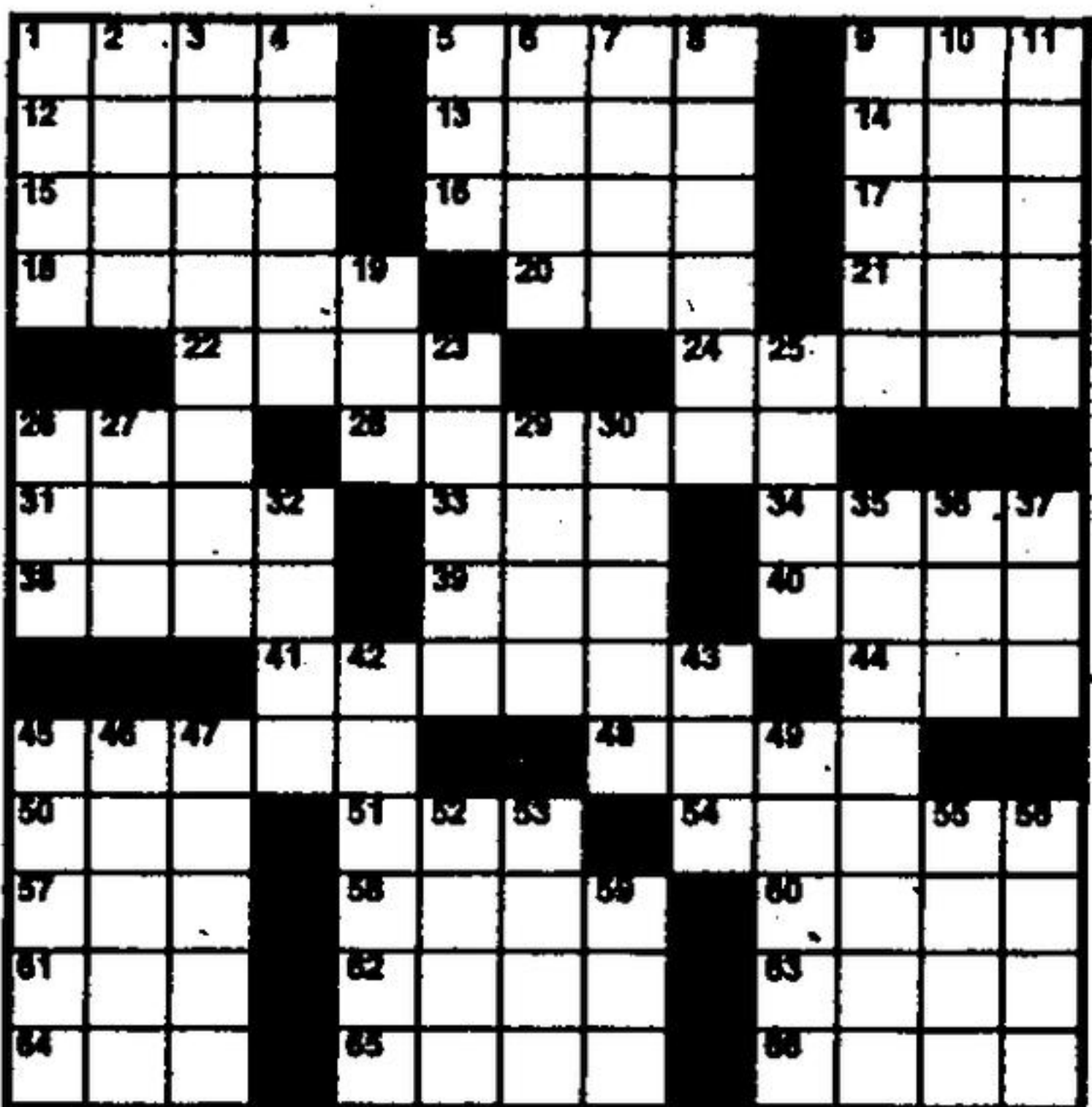
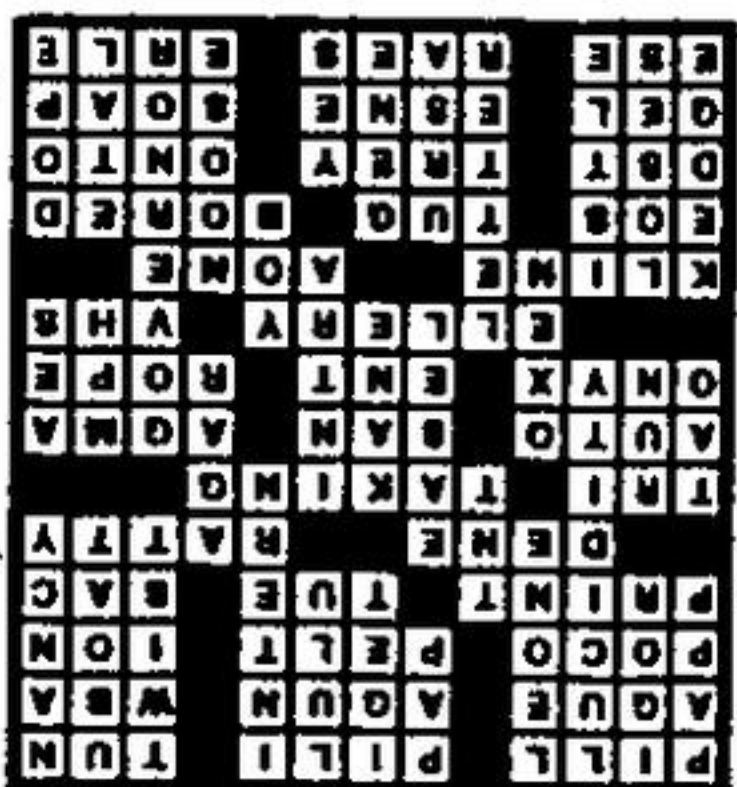
- Chew thoroughly. This releases the natural flavors of food.
- During a meal, switch from one food to another, rather than finishing one at a time. For instance, eating some meat, some green vegetables, then some potatoes helps keep the taste buds stimulated by different foods.
- Herbs — such as basil, dill and thyme — often give rather bland foods a distinctive taste. Use these herbs; they may improve appetite.
- Be careful of hot, peppery spices that can cause stomach irritation.
- Bottled flavorings, such as banana and vanilla often enhance bland foods.
- Because chocolate is a favorite flavor for many people, you may find that sprinkling a non-fat chocolate flavoring on certain foods, such as oatmeal, may make them more palatable.
- Try other flavor-enhancers, such as cheese, bacon, tomato or apple. Many artificial flavors are available in supermarkets.

ACROSS

- 1 Capsule
- 5 Nut tree
- 9 Cask
- 12 Malarial fever
- 13 Son of —
- 14 Basketball league (abbr.)
- 15 Somewhat (mus.)
- 16 Animal hide
- 17 Electrically charged particle
- 18 Art reproduction
- 20 After Mon.
- 21 Pouch
- 22 Sand hill
- 24 Rodent-ridden
- 26 B plus one
- 28 Grabbing
- 31 Car
- 33 —
- 34 Francisco
- 34 Phonetic symbol
- 38 Semi-precious stone
- 39 Noun suffix
- 40 Heavy string
- 41 Detective
- 44 Videotape type

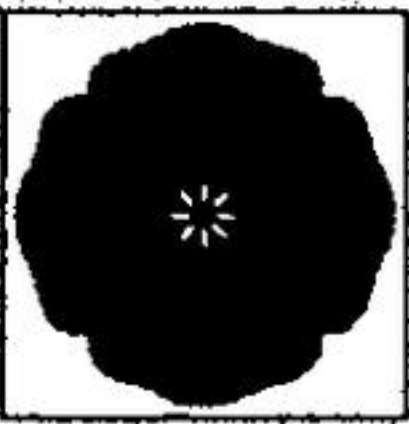
DOWN

- 1 Producer Joseph —
- 2 Opera prince
- 3 Cleanness
- 4 Sierra —
- 5 Soft food
- 6 By the time — to
- 7 Something remarkable (sl.)
- 8 Hospital doctor
- 9 Entwine
- 10 German submarine
- 11 — Reagan
- 19 Powerful explosive (abbr.)
- 23 Studio item
- 25 Lab substance
- 26 Chinese philosophy
- 27 Flea
- 29 Citizen —
- 30 Opp. of extra
- 32 Work cattle
- 35 State's leader
- 36 Speed measure (abbr.)
- 37 Roman
- 42 Alphabetic character
- 43 Houdini
- 45 Small anchor
- 46 Misplaces
- 47 Tropical basket fiber
- 49 Snare
- 52 — Major (constellation)
- 53 Hereditary factor
- 55 And others (2 wds.)
- 56 Airplane varnish
- 59 Uh-huh



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