



## Controlling Chronic Pain

(NAPS)—Many of the Americans who suffer from chronic pain have begun taking steps toward relieving their condition—literally.

Dancing and other fun exercises and activities have been found to reduce chronic pain. Doctors say that during physical activity the body releases chemicals that block pain signals from reaching your brain. These chemicals also help alleviate anxiety and depression, conditions that can make pain more difficult to control.

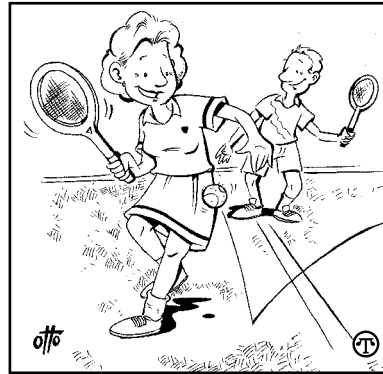
The book *Mayo Clinic on Chronic Pain* offers pain sufferers the following exercise tips to help them stay motivated and possibly walk away from their conditions:

- **Set Goals.** Start with simple goals and then progress to longer-range ones. People who can stay physically active for six months usually end up making regular activity a habit. Remember to make goals realistic and achievable.

- **Pace Yourself.** Do a little bit at a time and then rest. When you first exercise, you may experience discomfort from muscle weakness and joint stiffness. But after a few days, as you gain strength and flexibility, the pain should start to lessen.

- **Add Variety.** Vary what you do to prevent boredom. For example, try alternating walking and cycling with swimming or a low impact aerobics class.

- **Be Flexible.** If you're espe-



**Recent evidence suggests that leading an active lifestyle can help relieve chronic pain.**

cially busy or under the weather on a certain day, it's okay to adapt or completely skip exercising on occasion.

- **Track Your Progress.** Record what you do each time you exercise, how long you do it and how you feel during and after activity. Recording your efforts can help you reach goals and remind you that you're making progress.

- **Reward Yourself.** Work on developing an internal reward that comes from feelings of accomplishment, self-esteem and control of your own behavior. After each activity session, take five minutes to sit down and savor the good feelings that exercise can give you.

*Mayo Clinic on Chronic Pain* is available in most book stores for \$14.95 or by calling 800-291-1128 and mentioning order code 641.