

In Pain? Study Suggests Cussing Power for Relief

You believe in prayer power. But Keele University researchers are suggesting a different kind of power to alleviate pain: cussing.

Indeed, the study insists that spewing foul language out of your mouth can relieve pain. But get this: it's only for people who swear infrequently. If you have a prolific potty mouth you might be out of luck.

Although Keele's previous research affirmed that swearing can reduce the feeling of pain, this new study examined whether people who swear more often in everyday life get as much pain relief from cursing as those who swear less frequently.

Here's the rub: Seventy-one participants aged 18 to 46 completed a questionnaire that assessed swearing frequency. Researchers assessed pain tolerance by how long participants could keep their hands in icy water. Findings revealed that the more often people swear in daily life, the less extra time they were able to hold their hand in the icy water when swearing, compared with when not swearing.

"The important message from this latest study is interesting because, while saying that swearing as a response to pain might be beneficial, there is evidence that if you swear too often in everyday situations the power of swearing won't be there when you really might need it," says Dr. Richard Stephens, co-author of the study.

"While I wouldn't advocate the prescription of swearing as part of a medicalized pain management strategy, our research suggests that we should be tolerant of people who swear while experiencing acute pain. Indeed, I occasionally receive letters from members of the public recounting episodes in

which they, as adults, have been chastised for swearing during a painful episode. They feel that my research findings vindicate their actions.”

As for me, I’ll stick with the prayer power. How about you?