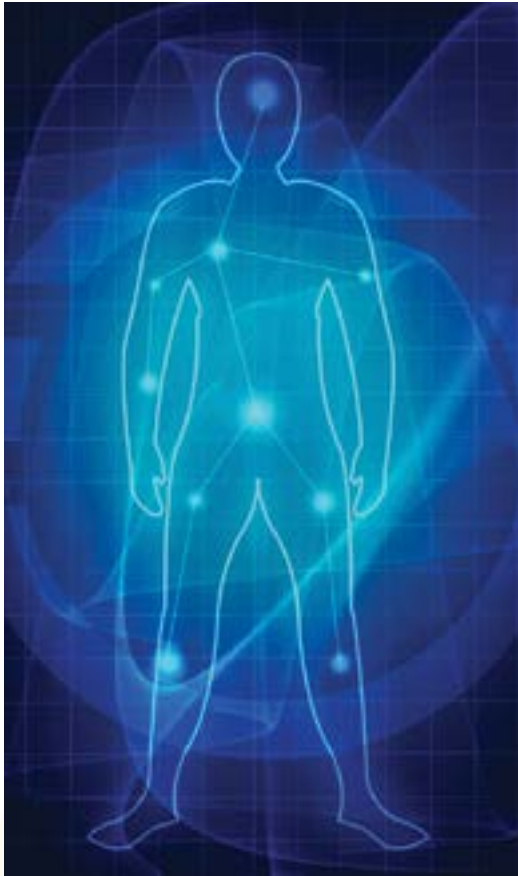


# Pain

## New Ways to Treat a Common Problem



### What is Pain?

Pain is a complex problem that is shaped by physical factors like an injury. Pain can affect how you think, feel and what you do.

### What are the 2 Types of Pain?



Acute Pain



Chronic Pain

### Acute Pain

This is a warning sign from the body that you may be hurt or something is wrong. It lets you know that you need to stop what you are doing and you may need to seek medical attention.

### What can cause acute pain?

- Injury
- Surgery
- Dental procedure
- Heart attack
- Other acute medical problems

The pain is usually temporary and can respond to treatments like:



- Short-term medications
- Rest
- Ice and/or heat therapy
- Physical therapy
- Exercise programs (specific for the type of pain)
- Acupuncture
- Surgery (in some cases)



## Chronic Pain

Pain that continues after your body has healed. It can also occur with conditions like arthritis or diabetes. Pain becomes chronic when it continues for longer than 3 months. Lifestyle factors may make chronic pain worse and can include:

- Inactivity
- Stress
- Using tobacco (cigarettes, pipes, chewing tobacco)
- Poor sleep
- Poor eating habits
- Substance use (alcohol, street drugs)



### Chronic Pain Can Impact All Areas of Your Life.

You may find that pain limits you from doing your daily activities like cooking meals, doing the laundry, cleaning your home, and playing with your children/grandchildren. Performing duties at work may be difficult. Your personal relationships can become stressful. Chronic pain may also worsen your other medical problems.

### What Can You Do?

Treating chronic pain begins with ways you can manage your pain and reduce the effects the pain has on your life. This is called self-management and includes the following:

What You Can Do	
General Health Activities	
An illustration showing a green apple, a carrot, and a dumbbell with a blue measuring tape coiled around them, symbolizing healthy eating and physical activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Practice mindfulness</li><li>• Work on healthy relationships</li><li>• Get a good night's sleep every night</li><li>• Eat healthy foods</li><li>• Move your body every day</li><li>• Stop smoking and other tobacco products</li><li>• Do activities you enjoy</li></ul>
Pain Management Strategies	
An illustration of seven people of various ages and ethnicities sitting in a circle on the floor, facing each other, representing a support group or a pain management class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Posture – standing/sitting up straight</li><li>• Lose weight if you are carrying some extra pounds</li><li>• Eat more vegetables and fruits</li><li>• Practice deep breathing and relaxation</li><li>• Attend pain management classes</li><li>• Join support groups</li></ul>

## What are the Goals of Chronic Pain Treatment?

Work with your healthcare provider to set goals. Focus on goals that you can do to lessen the impact of your pain and improve your quality of life.

Some potential goals could be:

- Regain your ability to move, exercise, and participate in life
- Improve your happiness and satisfaction with life
- Increase your activities and connections with others
- Improve the overall quality of your life
- Reconnect with what is important to you
- Improve your ability to manage your pain and return to a healthy lifestyle
- Gain understanding of your chronic pain
- Correct other medical issues that can be caused by chronic pain → muscle weakness, poor sleep, poor diet



## What are Some of the Options for Treating Pain?

### HEALTH



### WEALTH

#### 1. Self-management

Everything you can do on your own to manage your health problems and live your life as fully as possible

#### 2. Non-medication Treatments

Behavioral Therapies

- Learn to react to pain in a way that helps you function better and reduce your pain
  - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
  - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
  - Mindfulness-based Therapies
- Acupuncture
- Yoga and Tai Chi
- Spinal manipulation (Chiropractic therapy)

#### 3. Non-opioid Medication Treatments

*Topical Treatments*

- Gels, creams, ointments, or patches that are applied to the skin on a painful area
  - Diclofenac gel
  - Methyl salicylate cream/ointment
  - Lidocaine patch





### Oral Treatments

- Anti-inflammatory medications – for muscle/bone pain
  - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
    - Ibuprofen, naproxen, meloxicam, etodolac
- Antidepressant medications – for muscle/bone and nerve pain
  - Tricyclic antidepressants (TCA)
    - Nortriptyline, desipramine, amitriptyline, imipramine
  - Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI)
    - Duloxetine, venlafaxine
- Anticonvulsant medications – for nerve pain
  - Gabapentin, pregabalin

## 4. Opioid Medications

- Opioids only take the edge off of chronic pain, no matter how much you take
- They will not take the pain away
- Any dose can be risky, especially higher doses, causing more side effects without improving your pain
- Methadone is an opioid that is sometimes used for chronic pain. With long-term use, the amount in the body can build up and put people at risk for respiratory depression (slow or shallow breathing) and possible overdose. Your heart should also be monitored using an electrocardiogram (EKG) every year when using methadone
- Opioids are no longer recommended for the treatment of chronic pain

### What is an Opioid?

Opioids are a type of pain medication. Common opioids include:

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| • Morphine    | • Methadone     |
| • Oxycodone   | • Hydromorphone |
| • Hydrocodone | • Fentanyl      |

### Did You Know?

- Healthcare providers used to think opioids were safe and could help reduce chronic pain when used for long periods of time.
- New information is now available that shows long-term opioid use may not be helpful or safe in treating chronic pain.
- Long-term opioid use can also lead to multiple problems including loss of pain relieving effects, increased pain, unintentional death, dependence, opioid use disorder or addiction, respiratory depression (slow or shallow breathing), problems with sleep, mood changes, hormonal changes, difficulty with bowel movements, and worsening of the immune system.
- We now know that opioids are not the best treatment for most types of pain. Non-drug treatments are considered the ideal treatments for pain.



Please call \_\_\_\_\_ with any questions or concerns.

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text - 838255