

Pain Management

Most of us have experienced physical pain. Pain can be short-term or long-term, barely noticeable or very intrusive. There are things that you can do to reduce the effects of pain on your life, such as exercising, stretching, pacing and planning your activities.

Talking about pain and how it impacts your life can help too! These things may not be obvious and they do not come easily.



Pain that typically lasts less than 3 to 6 months is called acute pain.

Chronic pain or persistent pain is pain lasting beyond the usual course of 3 to 6 months and negatively affecting a person's well-being.

Pain management treatment can include pain-relieving medications, physical therapies, complementary therapies (acupuncture or massage), or talk therapy.

Seek advice on new coping strategies and skills. A psychologist or occupational therapist can help you cope with pain.

Rates of Chronic Pain are 2X higher for individuals who experience mental illness...

“... there's really high rates of chronic pain among individuals with serious mental illness. Thinking about chronic pain and the general population, it's about 30% of individuals. And then when we look at mental health populations, it's so much higher, estimates can range anywhere from 50% to 60%, even sometimes higher depending if you look at specific chronic pain diagnoses.”

-Dr. Travaglini, a post-doctoral fellow in the U.S. Department of Veteran's My Research Center



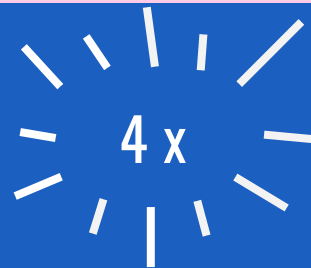
Chronic Pain & Mental Health

Living with daily pain is physically and emotionally stressful. Chronic stress is known to change the levels of stress hormones and neurochemicals found within your brain and nervous system. These can affect your mood, thinking, and behavior. Disrupting your body's balance of these chemicals can bring on depression in some people.

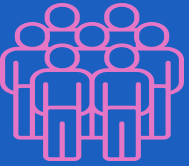
Chronic Pain & Depression

Other health conditions such as anxiety and depression, resulting in a low health-related quality of life, are often associated with persistent pain.

Research shows that those with chronic pain are four times more likely to have depression or anxiety than those who are pain-free.



Common Chronic Pain Conditions



Chronic migraines

Fibromyalgia

Back pain

Multiple Sclerosis

Arthritis

Neck pain

Ways to Help

Stress-reduction techniques such as meditation and journaling can be excellent skills used in coping with pain.

Talk therapy can be effective in treating both depression or anxiety and the management of chronic pain.

Exercise helps with managing pain and also improving balance. Moving your body helps your joints, which are important for mobility. Contrary to belief, exercise may even be better than rest for some pain, such as arthritis pain!



Additional Coping Strategies

Pain rehabilitation programs usually provide a team approach to treatment, including physical health and mental health support. They are experts in pain and understand how related these conditions tend to be.

Tip: You can **request a referral** from your doctor for Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, or a pain clinic. No need to wait for the doctor to offer it.



Best Practices: Group Work & Motivational Interviewing

Managing pain can be an isolating experience. Group work provides opportunities for social interaction and the space for individuals who share similar experiences to support one another. Sharing experiences can be healing in itself.

The use of **motivational interviewing strategies** while engaging people in conversations about their pain is important. **Successful conversations will be exploratory** and focus on these areas:

- (1) improve understanding of the pain experience;
- (2) improve acceptance of living with some degree of chronic pain;
- (3) increase awareness of coping that may come from using medication to manage chronic pain;
- (4) minimize the impact of chronic pain in daily activities, and;
- (5) improve interpersonal learning for individuals experiencing chronic pain.

RESOURCES

<https://www.mhanational.org/chronic-pain-and-mental-health>

<https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/fixing-the-system/features-and-news/4246-research-weekly-chronic-pain-smi>

https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/rtp_podcast_pain_management_transcript.pdf



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