



Pain & ways to manage

Pain is your awareness of hurt or discomfort and how you perceive it. This applies when you feel physical or emotional pain.

Pain can be a sign that something is wrong, such as a skin injury, an infection, or an illness. It can range from a mild discomfort to pain that is extreme and severe.

Emotional pain is often described as distress, mental anguish, or a “broken heart.”

Physical pain and your emotions interact with each other. Your emotions have a direct impact on how you feel pain. You can use your emotions and your mind to help you manage pain.



TYPES OF PAIN

Acute Pain

This type of pain usually starts suddenly. It can range from mild to severe and is caused by another problem or event. Examples are:

- A temporary illness, such as an earache, the flu, or a sore throat
- An injury, such as a broken bone, or a burn, a sprain or strain
- Surgery or other medical procedure
- Labor and delivery

When the cause of the pain is treated with success, the pain goes away.

Chronic Pain

With this type, pain signals keep firing in the nervous system for weeks, months, or years. The cause is not always known, but it may be due to or related to a number of reasons. These include:

- Arthritis
- Back problems
- Cancer or chemotherapy for cancer
- Headaches that persist
- Medical conditions that cause problems with nerve signals, such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis
- Other chronic health conditions, such as fibromyalgia and sickle cell anemia
- A past injury or illness

Chronic pain can interfere with your daily activities and affect the way you eat, sleep, work, relate to others, and enjoy life in general. When you have chronic pain, it is common to be irritable, worried, angry, and depressed. Having chronic pain and depression increases the risk of suicide. The need to stop the pain can lead to:

- Unproven treatments that could be harmful
- Overuse and/or addiction to pain relieving medicines. Drug use.
- Repeated surgeries



IDENTIFY & BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN YOUR PAIN

Answering the questions below will help you identify your pain and be able to explain it to your doctor or health care provider.

1. Where does it hurt?
2. How much does it hurt?
3. When did the pain first start?
4. How long have you had it?
5. Does it last all the time or does it come and go?
6. Does it occur with any other problems or symptoms?
7. What makes the pain worse?
8. What medicines have you taken to relieve the pain?
9. What treatments other than medicines have you used?
10. How has the pain affected your life?



25 METHODS TO MANAGE PAIN

1. **Acupuncture.** A trained therapist inserts hair-thin needles at specific areas just below the skin (acupoints) to stimulate the body's self-healing abilities. Electroacupuncture adds wires to the needles to stimulate nerve endings. Some researchers believe this activates endorphins.
2. **Biofeedback.** This is a process of learning how to control and change internal functions to manage pain and other conditions. Biofeedback devices measure your breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, or other functions. Through training in relaxation or imagery, you learn to alter bodily functions to feel more relaxed and to help manage pain.
3. **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).** This helps a person identify and then modify thoughts and behaviors that focus on pain.
4. **Cold treatment.** Examples are placing an ice pack, a bag of frozen vegetables, or a cold washcloth on the area that aches. Apply cold treatment for 20 minutes at a time. For pain from an acute injury, use cold treatment for the first 48 hours.
5. **Counseling.** This can be individual, family, or group therapy that provides emotional support and teaches ways to identify and deal with stress and emotions that increase pain.
6. **Dietary supplements.** Examples are collagen for arthritis pain and ginger to reduce inflammation. Note: Follow your doctor's advice for dietary supplements.
7. **Distraction.** This focuses your attention on something other than the pain, such as watching a movie, working on a hobby or project, and helping others.
8. **Electrical stimulation called TENS.** (This is transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). This uses a device that sends gentle electrical impulses through the skin at certain pain sites of the body to block pain signals before they reach the brain.
9. **Endorphins.** These are painkilling proteins that occur naturally in the body. The word endorphin is a Greek term that means "the morphine within." Brisk walking, running, and other aerobic exercises may release endorphins. The endorphins lower pain.



10. **Exercise.** Stretching and flexibility. These help with range of motion and reduce stiffness in joints that could lead to pain.

11. **Heat treatment.** Examples are a heat pack, a hot water bottle, a heating pad (set on low), or warm shower water on the area that hurts. Apply heat treatment for 20 minutes at a time. For pain from an acute injury, use heat treatment after using cold treatment for 48 hours.

12. **Hypnosis.** This uses refocusing techniques to block or transform pain.

13. **Massage.** This gives a temporary relief of pain due to muscle stiffness and muscle spasms.

14. **Medications – Over-the-counter (OTC)**

- Oral pain relievers. Examples are acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium. These also reduce fever and, except for acetaminophen, reduce swelling.
- Topical cremes, lotions, ointments, and gels. These offer temporary relief for localized areas of pain, such as fingers and knees due to arthritis. Substances in these include menthol, eucalyptus, capsaicin, and salicylates.



15. **Medications – Prescribed**

- Opioids. Examples are codeine, hydrocodone (Vicodin), meperidine (Demerol), morphine, and oxycodone (OxyContin).
- Non-opioids. These include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as piroxicam (Feldene), naproxen, and nambumetone (Relafen). These are commonly prescribed for arthritis pain.
- Adjuvants. These include antidepressants, anticonvulsants, antimigraine drugs, muscle relaxants, and corticosteroids.
- Local anesthetics

16. **Occupational therapy.**

This is learning how to do activities of daily living while managing pain.

17. **Physical therapy.** This focuses on improving mobility, flexibility, strength and endurance through physical exercises and assistive devices.

18. **Placebos.** These use the power of suggestion that a pill, etc., without actual medicine, will treat the pain because a person believes it will.

19. **Prayer.** This is a spiritual way to meditate, which helps to lower heart rate and decreases muscle tension. Connecting to a higher power is a way to cope with pain and deal with things that cannot be changed.

20. **Relaxation.** Examples are deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

21. **Self-Soothing.** This is giving compassion and reassurance to yourself. It is giving yourself permission to accept the pain and trying to stay calm and relaxed. It also includes seeking physical comfort, such as taking a warm bath.

22. **Support groups.** These allow emotional support and a shared understanding for dealing with pain.

23. **Surgery.** This may be needed to correct a physical problem that causes pain.

24. **Tai Chi.** This form of exercise uses slow, gentle movements to improve balance and increase flexibility.

25. **Yoga.** This uses breathing exercises, postures, and movements to unite the body, mind, and spirit. It also improves blood pressure and circulation.