

How to Manage **Pain** at Home

This guide will help you understand:

What is pain?

What causes pain?

What you can do to help manage your pain.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

One:carepath gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide.

What is pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that happens as a result of an injury or illness. It's your body's way of telling you that something isn't right. Feeling pain from injury or illness is your body's way of letting you know that you need to do something, or stop doing something that causes the pain.



It's important to talk to your healthcare team if you are having pain and figure out what the cause may be.

What causes pain?

Pain can be complicated. Everyone experiences and reacts to pain differently. Some people may have pain because of a health condition but there can be other causes. Even your mood, or having anxiety or depression can cause or make pain worse. When pain is not treated, it can take over your life, making you feel anxious, depressed and/or angry. It can also affect your sleep, relationships, activity level and how you enjoy life.

What you can do to help manage your pain.

Managing pain works best when you play an active role.

- Try to figure out if there is a cause for your pain.
- Is it better or worse at different times?
- What helps or makes it worse?
- You may want to use a symptom diary to record information about your pain. Tracking this information will help you talk to healthcare team about your pain.

Physical steps you can try:

- **Medication:** If you take medication for your pain, take it as prescribed so your symptom doesn't get too bad.
- **Gentle exercise:** If it is safe for you, do gentle exercises like walking, swimming or riding a stationary bike every day.
- **Daily Stretching:** Stay flexible by stretching every day.
- **Heat or cold:** This can help arthritis, sore muscles and other aches.
- **Pace yourself:** Break larger jobs into small jobs or save the harder jobs for when you have less pain. Rest often during the activity.

- **Get a good night's sleep:** Pain may make you tired. Pain may be worse if you don't get enough sleep. Talk to your doctor if pain is causing you sleep problems.
- **Drink plenty of water:** If you experience pain in the morning or after a meal, water may help (if you do not have fluid restrictions).
- **Limit or stop:** Alcohol, caffeine and nicotine to see if your symptoms get better. These can make your pain worse.

Mental activities you can try:

- **Think positively:** Positive thinking may ease pain.
- **Distract yourself:** Do something that you enjoy to try and keep yourself mentally busy. For example, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, needlework or video games.
- **Relax:** Try meditation, mindfulness, or relaxation therapy. Learning to relax and to change the way you think may help you cope with pain.

Relaxation techniques you can try at home.

Ask if someone on your healthcare team can help you get started. You can also learn some on your own. Some techniques include:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group.
- **Deep breathing exercises:** Slow your breathing to the point where you are as relaxed in your breathing as possible. Breaths should be deep and fill your lungs.
- **Meditation:** Sit or lie in a comfortable position for 20 minutes. Be aware of your breathing, your sensations (including your pain), your thoughts and feelings.
- **Guided Imagery:** Form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.

- **Yoga:** Can relax your breathing, ease muscle tension, and energize your mind and body.
- **Massage:** Helps reduce all over muscle tension and pain, which can help you relax.
- **Hydrotherapy:** Uses flowing water to relax muscles.
- **Music and art therapy:** Listening, playing music, drawing and painting can help you to relax.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

Speak with your healthcare team if pain is a problem for you. Your worries and questions are important to you and them. Your healthcare team may speak to you about the different medications you can take.

- Let your healthcare team know if a medication is working for you or if you're having side effects. You may have to try a few different ones to know what works best for you.
- Talk to them before taking over-the-counter medication, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Your healthcare team may suggest treatment options such as physiotherapy, acupuncture, acupressure, or TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation).

Get immediate help if you have:

- Pain that is severe and not improving;
- Pain along with other symptoms like vomiting, trouble breathing, fever or bleeding; or
- Pain in your chest.

Tips on sharing your symptoms with your healthcare team:

Make some notes about your pain symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them.

- Has there been a change in your pain?
- What does your pain feel like? How bad is it?
- When does it happen and how long does it last?
- What makes it better or worse? What have you tried already?
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking including over the counter medications.

Notes:
