

What is chronic pain?

Information for patients

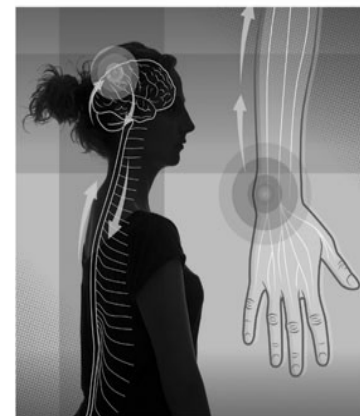


You have been diagnosed with chronic pain. This affects 1 in 4 people in Scotland and is a recognised health condition by the Scottish Government.

Chronic pain occurs when changes happen in our pain system.

We all have a pain system which is designed to protect us. This pain system is made up of nerves carrying messages between the body and brain. Chronic pain occurs when this system becomes more sensitive. This can happen following:

- An accident or injury
- Surgery or medical treatment
- Along with another medical diagnosis
- It may have no clear cause.



When this happens pain can become constant and/or unpredictable. Imagine a volume control stuck at 11.

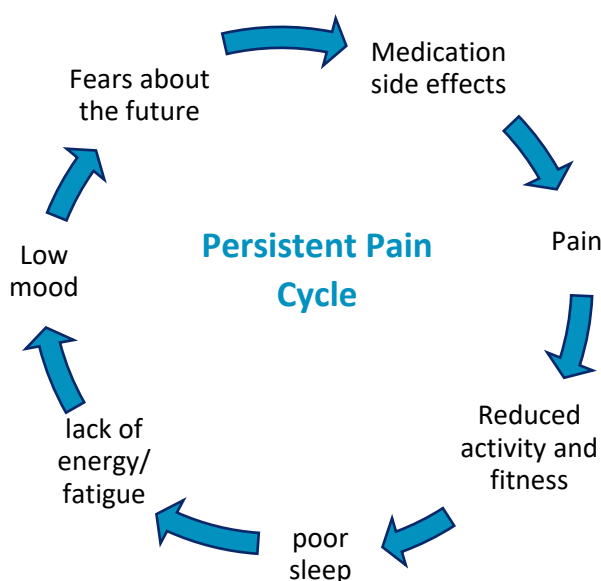


Chronic pain is complex and can be wound up by many different factors such as:

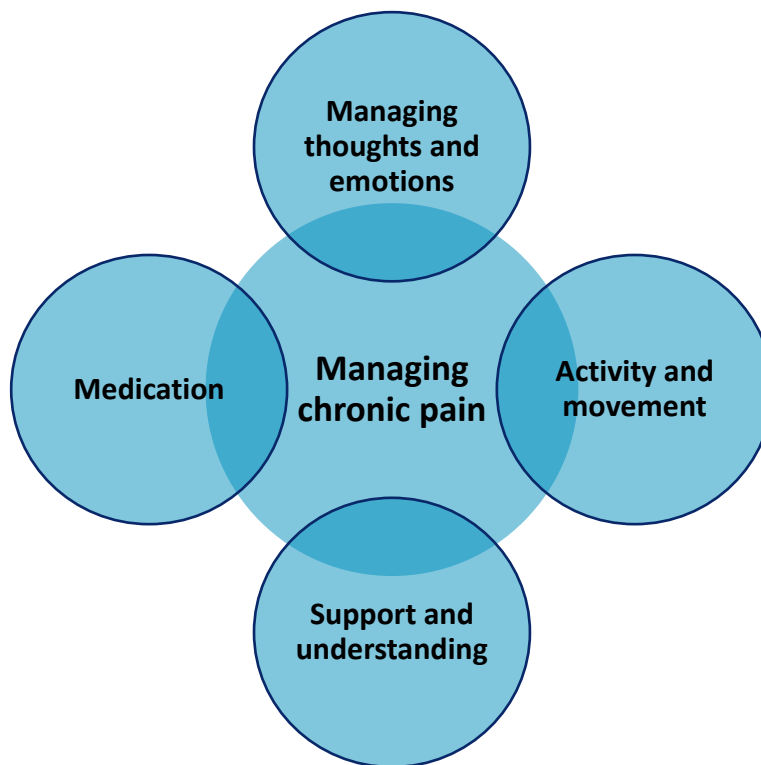
- General health
- Stress/anxiety/worry
- Thoughts
- Worry about what pain means
- Poor sleep
- Support from others
- Pushing through pain
- Activity levels.

Chronic pain can also flare up in response to normal activity. Flares in chronic pain are not usually a sign of further damage.

Chronic pain is known to affect many areas of a person's life. This can be seen in the persistent pain cycle:



Research tells us that the best way to treat and manage chronic pain is by combining different approaches.



Combining these approaches can make the pain system become less sensitive. This can turn the volume control down.

Possible options for further support might be:

- Referral to the Pain Clinic
- Medication review
- Physiotherapy referral
- Pain Management referral
- Looking at online resources for self management.

Further information

NHS Lothian chronic pain website: <https://weare.nhslothian.scot/lcps/?default.aspx>

The NHS Lothian pain website includes links to:

Reconnect to Life: www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/pain-service/reconnect2life/

Pain Concern: www.painconcern.org.uk

Pain Toolkit: www.paintoolkit.org

NHS Inform: www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health

Living Life to the Full: <https://littf.com>

