

Condition:

Persistent Pain

What is it?

Persistent pain, chronic pain or long term pain; is pain that has lasted for longer than 3 months after you would have expected to recover following illness or injury. Treatments such as medication, therapies, exercise, injections or even surgery have proved unsuccessful in reducing or stopping your pain.

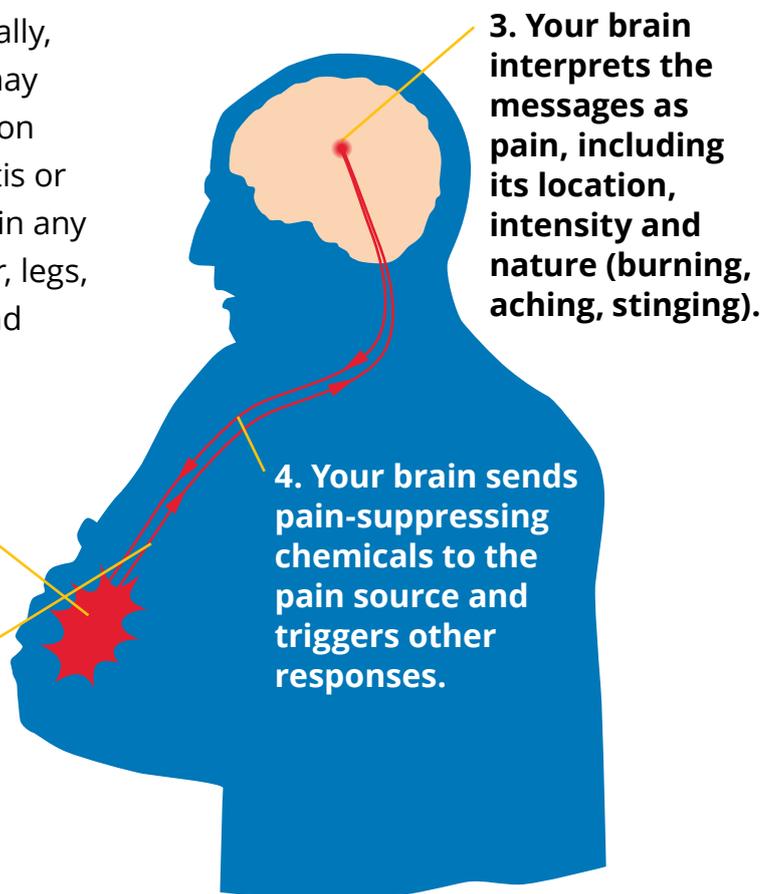
What causes persistent pain?

The cause of persistent pain is complex and not always clear but the problem arises within the pain system.

Persistent pain may start with a problem such as an injury or come on gradually, perhaps for no obvious reason. It may be as a result of a long term condition osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis or following an injury. Pain can be felt in any part of the body, e.g. back, shoulder, legs, and also throughout whole body and affect anyone of any age.

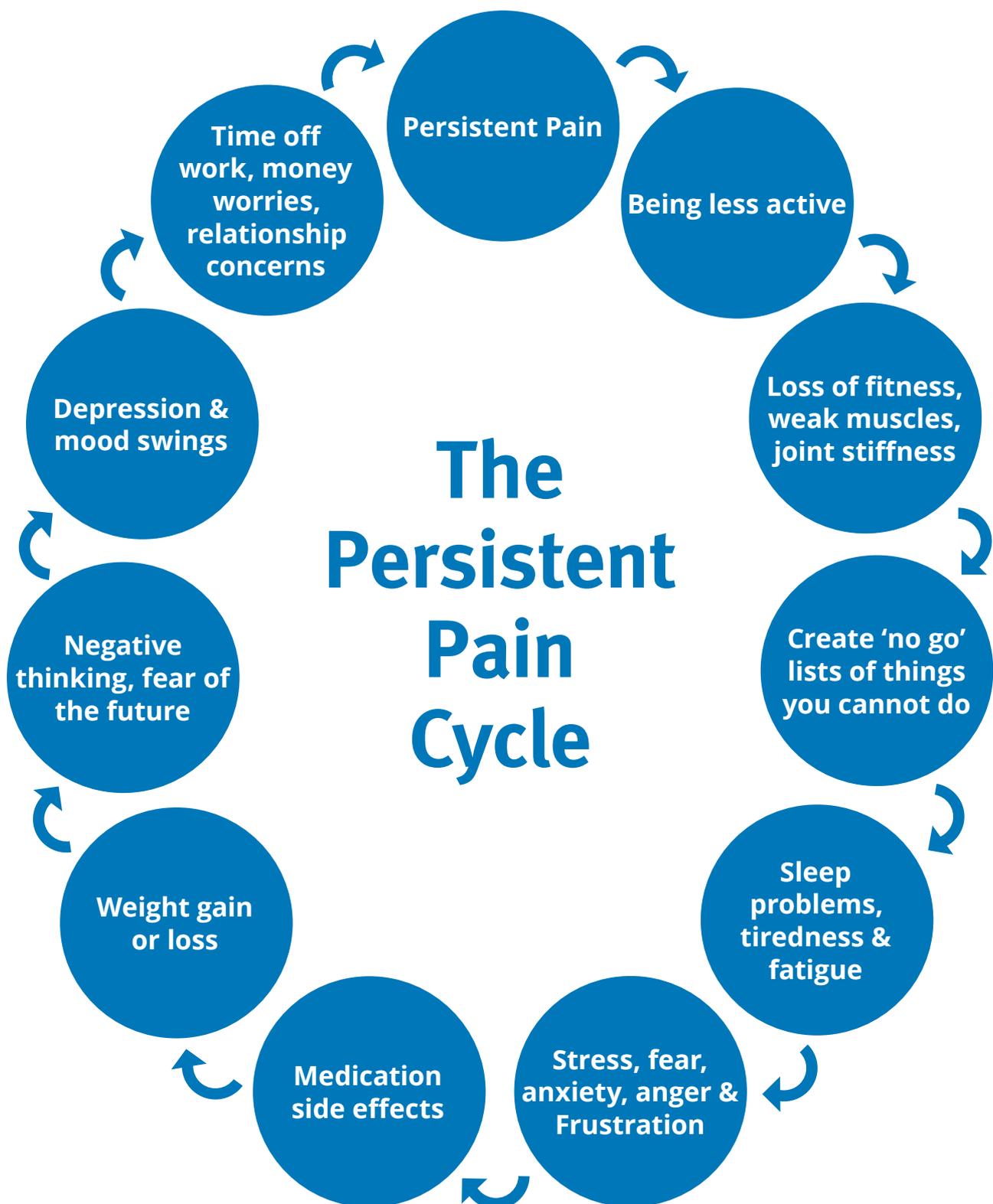
1. Pain source.

2. Pain messages move through peripheral nerves and up the spinal cord.



Symptoms

Unfortunately, there is more to persistent pain than simply feeling pain. Having pain all the time is challenging enough on it's own but it can also affect all parts of your life, this is referred to The Persistent Pain Cycle.



How is it diagnosed?

When pain has persisted for over 6 months and treatment options have failed to give long lasting relief, a GP/health professional such as a Pain Consultant or a Rheumatologist may diagnosis you with persistent pain. There are no investigation, test or scans that will identify persistent pain and on diagnosis you may be told you will have to learn to live with it.

Recommended Treatments

Medication

Prescription or over the counter painkillers are the treatment that most people expect to use when they have pain but using these frequently may not relieve all your pain. There are different types of pain medication that may be prescribed by either your GP /Pain Consultant so talk to them about your experience.

Pain Clinic

A Pain Clinic is where you will receive support from a team that may consist of Consultants, specialist physiotherapist, psychologist, occupational therapist and nurses. This may be 1:1 support with each of the specialist and or the option of attending a pain management course.

Pain Management courses

Pain Management courses are between 8 and 10 weeks have active approach to managing symptoms; teaching physical and psychological practical techniques to improve quality of life.

Self-Management

Building and creating a pain tool kit using different skills and tools can be helpful in successfully manage your pain.



Understanding Pain

Understanding what is happening to your body with persistent pain will help you feel less fearful about the symptom you are experiencing.

Exercise

Exercise reduces the effect of weak muscles and stiff joints and releases endorphins which boost our mood and help to reduce pain.

Pacing, Prioritising & Planning

Doing too much on your 'good' days, and less on your "bad days" is not an ideal for pain. Prioritise doing the things that really matter so you can plan and pace yourself.

Stress management

When you feel stressed you will feel more pain. Learning how to managing the symptoms of stress could have a positive effect on your pain.

Distraction/Hobbies/Work

You may think there's nothing that could distract you from focusing on your persistent pain but this is proven to work. Distraction can be in different forms but you can work out what forms work best for you through trial and error.

Goal Setting

Setting yourself simple, realistic goals or action plans for each day, and for the longer term, can help keep the body and mind active. Choose goals that matter to you and break them down into small and manageable steps.

Challenging Thoughts & Beliefs

Persistent pain can have a negative impact on your thoughts, feelings and emotions. Learning to recognise your thought so that you can begin to challenge and change them.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene is a variety of different practices and habits that are helpful to ensure good night time sleep quality and daytime alertness.

Relaxation

Relaxation skills could be helpful for reducing muscular tension and to unwind the mind. Relaxation techniques such as breathing techniques or doing something like reading a book, listening to music are helpful for many people.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice on focusing on the present moment. When you're mindful, you are aware of your thoughts and feelings without judging them good or bad. It is helpful in relieving stress and low mood.

Medication

Relieving pain completely by using painkillers is often not possible, however they are another tool management tool. Medication should be only taken on the advice of a health professional.

TENS

Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (or TENS for short) aims to block pain messages to the brain and encourage the body to release the hormone endorphins, acupuncture works in this way too. TENS machines are available on line or in pharmacies.

Useful links

Helplines



0300 123 0789



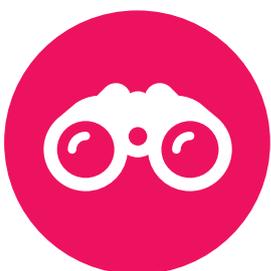
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Five ways to boost your wellbeing



Take notice
Be mindful



Be active
Physical activity



Keep learning
New hobbies



Connect
Reduce social isolation



Give back
Do something nice

Summary

Persistent pain is difficult to understand and can be difficult to treat. Managing persistent pain is not something that a health professional does to you or for you but something you can work on together. Being actively involved in managing your pain will mean that you have a better chance of working with your health-care professionals to improve your quality of life.