



CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Finding ways to manage chronic pain can feel like an overwhelming and never-ending obstacle. If you are living with chronic pain, you're certainly not alone. In fact, according to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, 25.3 million American adults, or about 11% of the population, reported suffering from chronic pain in a study conducted in 2012.



WHO IS AFFECTED?

Chronic pain comes in many forms. It may affect your bones, muscles, internal organs, or any other part of your body. From lower back problems to symptoms of fibromyalgia to migraines and arthritis, many people who suffer from chronic pain experience ailments that inhibit them from completing every day activities. As the severity worsens, pain often spreads to other parts of the body.

It's important to remember not to lose hope. There are many different treatments available today, and, depending on your particular ailment, you could begin to experience relief shortly after discovering the right treatment.



WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

Pain affects both the physical and mental state of those who suffer from chronic ailments. Physical pain is the discomfort you can physically feel within your body. These symptoms are often easy to point to or describe to others.



Emotional pain, however, is more difficult to identify. It comes in the form of sadness, anger, frustration, or any number of other negative feelings, and it's often derived from problems of physical pain.

Each individual's perception of pain is unique, which means there is no universal definition for pain. Where chronic pain is concerned, there is no



right or wrong answer. Someone with your condition may feel better or worse than you on certain days, but that doesn't make anyone's feelings less valid.

Pain is the body's way of signaling that something is wrong. Maybe it's serious, or maybe it's just something that needs your attention, but in no case is chronic pain something to be ignored. The relationship between emotional and physical pain can

trigger a domino effect if you don't care for your symptoms, so it's best to acknowledge chronic pain and take steps to confront your ailment as soon as possible.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHRONIC PAIN?

The short answer is: of course. Because each human is unique, each person who experiences chronic pain will experience different symptoms and obstacles. Chronic pain can result from a number of situations, including genetic predispositions and situational occurrences.

THE FOLLOWING ARE A FEW COMMON TYPES OF PAIN PEOPLE EXPERIENCE:



PHYSICAL INJURIES



ILLNESS
(TYPICALLY TEMPORARY PAIN)



ONGOING HEALTH ISSUES
(LONGER TERM PAIN)

Not all pain is chronic pain. Acute pain is not relative to the severity of pain you may experience; rather, it describes the brevity of the condition in relation to an injury from which your body will heal within a reasonable time frame. If you break your leg, for example, the pain will likely be intense, and it may last several hours or days, but once your bones have healed, your pain will most likely be gone.



Chronic pain, on the other hand, lasts for weeks, months, or years, and it often affects the sufferer's nervous system, increasing the body's sensitivity to painful sensations. People with cancer, diabetes, and other diseases are often faced with chronic pain.

WHAT CAUSES CHRONIC PAIN?

Pain is a very personal experience, so there is no test that can accurately pinpoint the location of pain. Pain management professionals rely heavily on the way their patients describe their pain to determine what part of the body is being affected and what may be causing the pain.

Chronic pain often occurs in a variety of locations within the body, so sufferers must work closely with their pain management specialists to identify the symptoms and causes of their pain. Technology can assist in diagnosing pain, but it's not a replacement for a pain management specialist who can custom-tailor a treatment plan that works best for their patients' bodies.



TREATMENTS

Ailments will respond differently to various treatments. It's important to keep in mind that not all chronic pain can be cured, but it can be managed.



SOME POPULAR TREATMENTS FOR CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERERS INCLUDE:

- Chiropractic
- Acupuncture
- Medications
- Electrical Simulation
- Nerve Blocks
- Surgery



TREATMENTS



LESS INVASIVE OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- Psychotherapy
- Relaxation Therapies
- Biofeedback
- Dietary Changes
- Behavioral Medication



COMMON ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PAIN MANAGEMENT INCLUDE:

- Tai Chi
- Chinese Medicine
- Meditation
- Massage Therapy

IS SELF-MANAGEMENT AN OPTION?

A self-management program makes you an active part of your treatment, requiring you to take actions to manage your own pain in your daily life. Self-management involves learning how to think, feel, and live better despite being in constant pain.

Research suggests that people who are participating in successful programs have increased their ability to cope with pain. The American Psychological Association notes the key factor with pain management is matching patients to the best forms of treatment for their unique needs. The right program may give the participant a new way of responding to pain.

If you have chronic pain that cannot be cured, you must cope with it. There is no cookie-cutter approach; as an individual your needs will be unique, and so, too, should be your approach to treatment.



IN CONCLUSION

Chronic pain may not be curable, but there are options that can help alleviate the discomfort. From traditional medication to holistic alternatives such as acupuncture, there are many ways with which you may find relief. The most effective way to treat pain is to develop a strategy that's best suited to you as an individual with unique needs.

It is essential that you seek the assistance of licensed professionals. Taking your treatment into your own hands and acting as an “arm chair doctor” through the use of the internet and TV cause lead to erroneous self-diagnoses and bigger pain and problems down the road.

