

Living with Chronic Pain

Persistent pain (sometimes called chronic or long-term) is:

Pain that continues for 3 months or more and may not respond to standard medical treatment. It can be disabling and frustrating for many people to manage. It can also affect relationships with your family, friends and work colleagues.

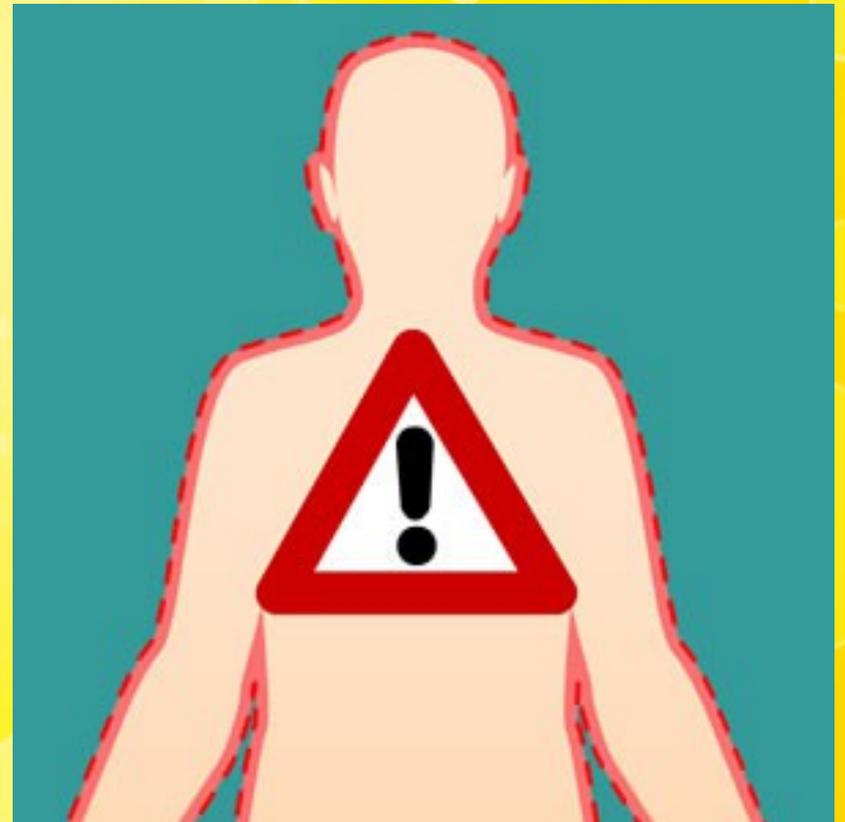
*Opioids like **Morphine**, **Oxycodone** or **Codeine** are very good painkillers for short-term pain after surgery or after an accident (such as a broken bone). This is known as **acute pain** and lasts days or weeks.*

*It used to be thought that opioids were also useful for people with longer-lasting pain. We now know that opioids **don't help** long-term pain and, more importantly, are **not safe** to take for longer periods of time. Doing this can cause **side effects**, **addiction** or **early death**.*

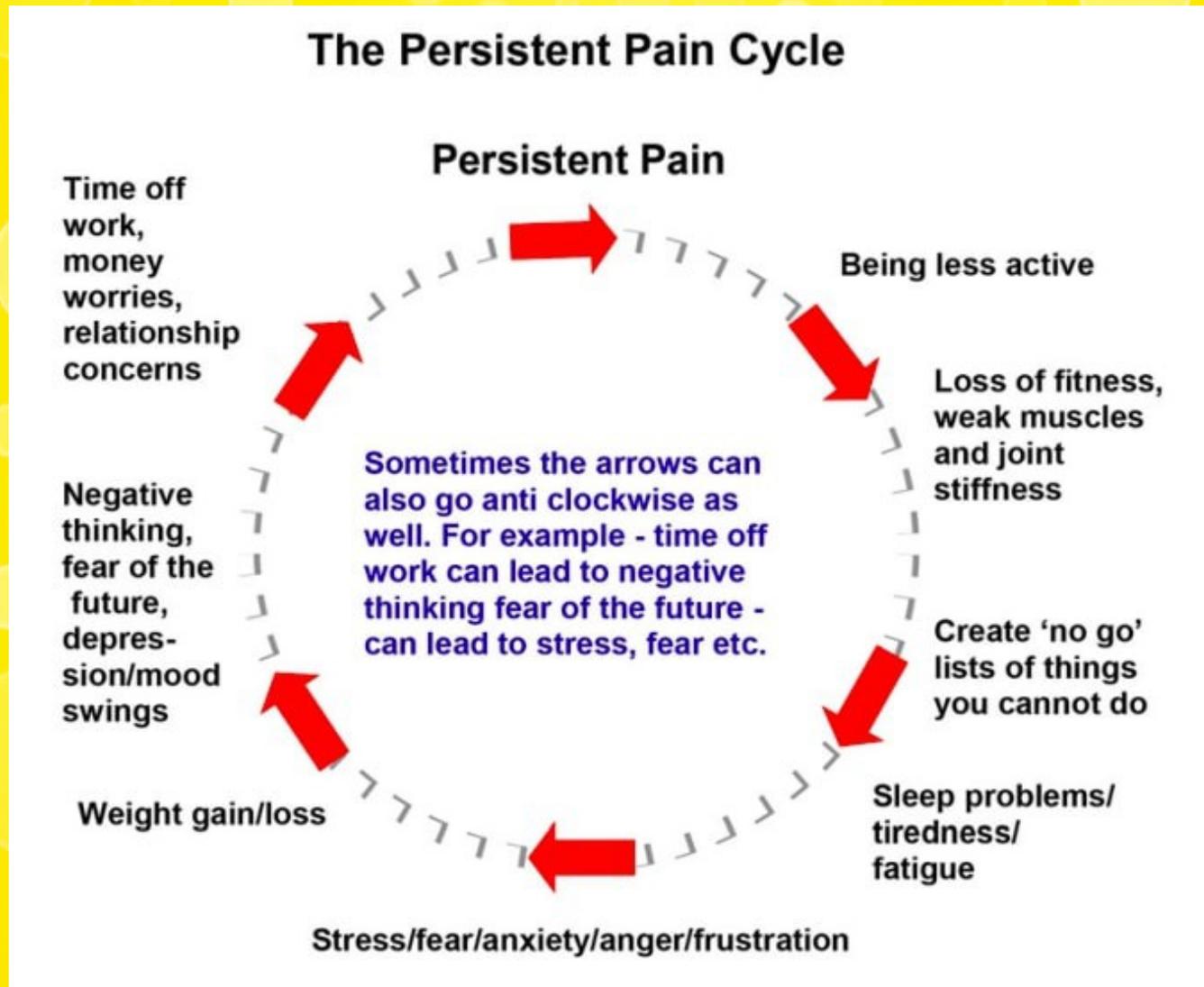


Side effects of opioids

- **Constipation and nausea (feeling sick)**
- **Daytime sleepiness, poor concentration and poor memory**
- **Problems sleeping at night, including snoring or difficulty breathing**
- **Effects on hormones**
 - **low testosterone levels**
 - **reduced fertility**
 - **low sex drive**
 - **irregular periods**
 - **feeling tired**
 - **hot flushes**
 - **depression**
 - **osteoporosis (thinning of the bones)**
- **Effects on your immune system**
 - **Reduced ability to fight infections (including Covid 19)**
- **Opioid-induced hypersensitivity**
 - **Becoming more sensitive to pain**



Do you feel trapped in a persistent pain cycle?



Break the cycle!

Tolerance, dependance and addiction

- **Tolerance** is when opioids become less effective over time, as your body has got used to the pain-relieving effect
- Your body can also become **dependant** on opioids, so that if you stop taking them suddenly you get symptoms of withdrawal
- Occasionally people in pain can become **addicted** to opioids. This can cause you to feel out of control about how much medicine you take or how often you take it. You might crave the medicine, or carry on taking it even when it has a negative effect on your physical or mental health



BEGINNERS GUIDE TO CHRONIC PAIN MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

You are in the driver seat and you're so much stronger than you know.

by Lovaine Cohen

1 ACCEPT YOUR PAIN

To be successful with chronic pain management, you must change your mindset. Don't think of yourself as a victim of your chronic pain. Your mindset is the KEY, and there comes a time when you need to accept the pain and start focusing on co-existing with it.

2 CUT BACK ON ALCOHOL

This is a dangerous habit because excessive drinking can cause damage to the liver and can leave medication less effective. Instead, limit your use of alcohol to very little or none.

3 PACE YOURSELF

There will be some days when you'll feel better than others and you may choose to do more than you normally would. However, just be mindful that you may feel more sore than usual the following day.

4 REGULAR EXERCISE

Moving about and exercising your body is a very important chronic pain management habit. Contrary to what you may think, lack of exercise can actually make your joints stiffer. So aim to move for at least 30 minutes 3 days per week.

5 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Long term stress is connected to high levels of cortisol in the body, so try to seek ways, such as meditation, that allow you to cope with your stress so you can be in better control of your symptoms.

6 SEEK A SUPPORT GROUP

You can feel less alone when you connect with others also living with chronic pain because they also understand what you're going through. You also have the chance of meeting someone who has lived with a chronic disease for a long time, and you can benefit from learning how they deal with pain.

7 BREAK DOWN TASKS

Break your tasks down into smaller, manageable parts. It's very easy to get overwhelmed and panicked to complete a project with a fast approaching deadline.

8 START A BEDTIME ROUTINE

Write all of your feelings of frustration you may have encountered throughout the in a journal. Jotting down your thoughts can set you up for a good night's sleep.

- There is many techniques in managing your pain and we are always here to support you finding your way!
- You can find out more on:

www.paintoolkit.org

We wish you a long and healthy life,

St. Andrew's House GP Surgery