

# Pain Management Fact Sheet

## Fun Facts and points to remember

### What is Pain?

The International Association for the Study of pain describes pain as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage”.

All pain is an individual human experience that is entirely subjective and can only be described by the person experiencing it.

Your attitudes, beliefs and personality can strongly affect how you experience pain.

### Cost of Pain

- Currently there are about 3.2 million adults living with chronic pain.
- 1 in 3 Australians over the age of 65 lives with chronic pain.
- Chronic pain is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most costly health burden in Australia, costing \$34.3 billion per year.
- Between 50 – 80% of people with pain are under-treated
- The rate of depression is 20% higher among people with chronic pain.

### Types of pain

There are 4 categories of pain:

1. **Acute pain** is pain that lasts for a short time and occurs following surgery or trauma or other condition. It acts as a warning to the body to seek help.
2. **Sub-acute pain** is pain that is progressing towards chronic pain, but this progression may be prevented. This is known as the transition phase.
3. **Recurrent pain** is pain that occurs on a cyclical basis, such as migraine or pelvic pain.
4. **Chronic pain** is pain that lasts beyond the time expected for healing following surgery or trauma.

### Pain Assessment

What information will you be asked about your pain?

- the pain site(s);
- history of illness or pain experience;
- past and concurrent medical and surgical interventions;
- imaging and other investigations;
- other treatments used and healthcare professionals consulted;
- family history (focusing on chronic pain conditions);
- medication (past and present);

Your doctor will also establish a detailed pain history, which includes:

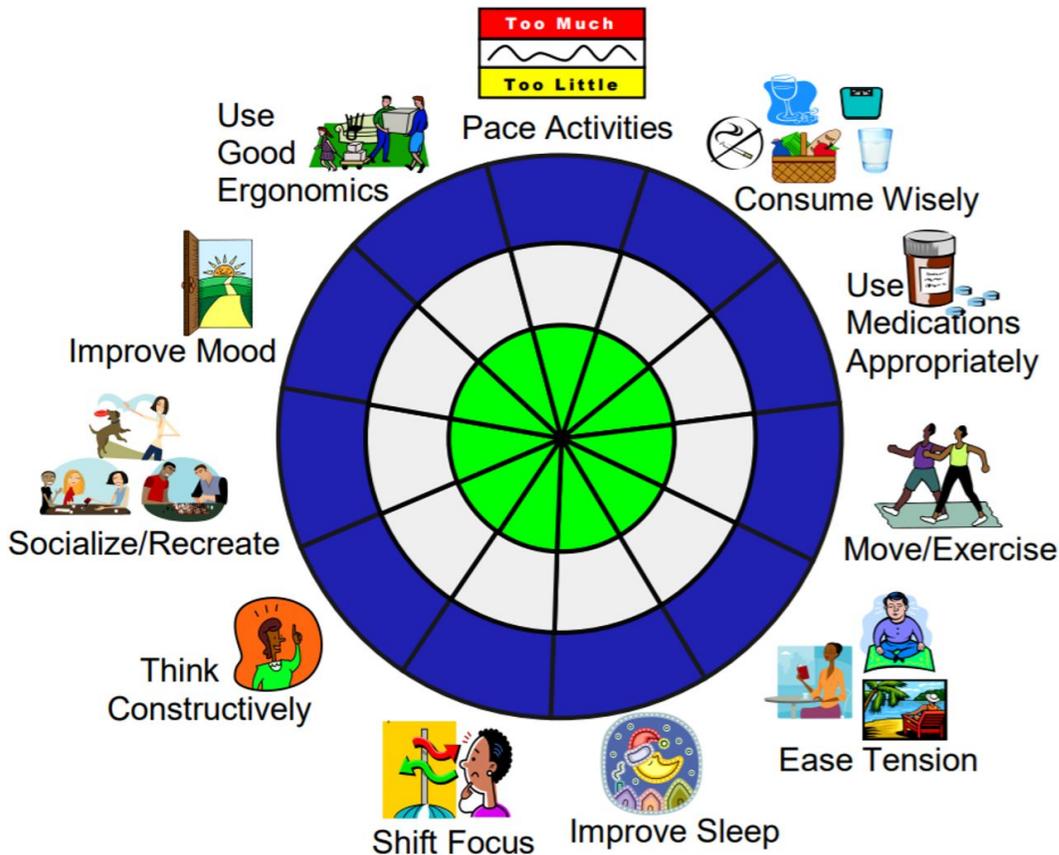
- circumstances associated with pain onset;
- primary site of pain;
- radiation of pain;
- character of pain (eg throbbing, aching, stabbing);
- intensity of pain (at rest, on movement, at present, during the past week, highest level);
- factors altering pain level (what makes it worse or better);
- associated symptoms; temporal factors (continuous or otherwise).

Based on the information you provide, the Doctor will then develop an individualised pain treatment plan.

Even after the initial pain treatment plan is put in place, the source and severity of pain, and the effectiveness of treatment, may fluctuate. You need to inform your doctor if your pain changes so that your plan can be reviewed and changed to meet your needs.

## Strategies to manage pain

Maintaining a pain diary which tracks your pain levels is a great way to see if your pain management plan is working. Some of the strategies that you may use include:



Gaining more information about pain and self-management strategies can also be useful. More information can be obtained from the following sites:

- [www.painaustralia.org.au](http://www.painaustralia.org.au)
- [www.painmanagement.org.au](http://www.painmanagement.org.au)
- [www.chronicpinaustralia.org.au](http://www.chronicpinaustralia.org.au)
- [www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain)
- [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)
- [www.arthritisvic.org.au](http://www.arthritisvic.org.au)

You can also attend community support network groups. These networks can be helpful in gaining information, advice, emotional support and an opportunity to share your stories of pain. Information about these networks can be found on the websites above, or speak to your GP.

## Medications

Your doctor may prescribe you some pain relief. Some of these medications may include:

- Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)
- Opioids
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-seizure medications
- Corticosteroids
- Muscle relaxants

- Topical medications
- Alternative therapies
- CBD cannabis oil

However, these medications may lead to unpleasant side-effects, including:

- Dependency and addiction – rare if you are following your GP instructions
- Effects on other body organs (e.g. chronic kidney disease)
- Nausea and constipation
- Drowsiness
- Falls or unsteady on your feet

If you are experiencing any side-effects, you need to speak to your doctor, as the medication may not be the right one for you.

Always remember that there are health professionals that can help you ease your pain:

- GP or specialist
- Pharmacist
- Nurses
- Pain clinics
- Palliative care team for pain management
- Local support networks
- Allied Health Professionals - OT, physiotherapist

If you would like more information, please speak to your Customer Care Manager.

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