

## RECOGNIZING AND TREATING CHRONIC PAIN



though there is no real and present danger. Chronic pain serves no function as it does not, in fact, play a role in protection.

Pain is subject to perception. Each person's pain is different, and it is real. It is influenced by who we are, how we feel at the moment, our lifestyle and the way we think.

### What is chronic pain?

Chronic pain is a disease that could arise following a physical wound, surgery, or even for no apparent reason. Pain can also be a result of diseases such as arthritis, migraine, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia or spinal problems.

Chronic pain is such a common health problem that it is estimated that it affects one person out of five.

Chronic pain is defined as pain that persists for longer than three months or after a normal healing period. The pain could be continuously felt, or only arise at certain times. Also, it could be strong or weak depending on the time of day.

Under normal circumstances, pain is a signal that protects the body against potential danger. However, when we suffer from chronic pain, the «alarm system» is deregulated, and the body sends a signal even

Chronic pain is still the subject of many myths and prejudices, but one thing for certain is that it's often difficult to manage its destabilizing and crippling effect.

### What is the impact of chronic pain?

Chronic pain impacts all areas of life for the person who suffers from it, including one's social life, spouse, family, work, sports and recreation. Chronic pain can also engender fear, a sense of injustice, a feeling of abandonment, anger, doubt, and discouragement.

### Which treatments actually work?

Treatment for chronic pain can vary from one person to the next, but it always strives to attenuate the pain and improve the quality of life of those subject to it.

Many **medications** and interventions such as **injections** can help ease the pain. Your doctor can advise you on the subject.

It is also very important to engage in **controlled physical activity**. This is something that physiotherapy and occupational therapy can help you do.

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Various **psychological techniques** can help people adapt to chronic pain and cope with it better. Psychological techniques also help one cope with depression and emotions such as fear, which are often related to chronic pain.

**Relaxation techniques** help balance the mind and body, effectively abating accumulated psychological and physical tensions, resulting in less pain.

The application of **heat or cold** to the affected areas can diminish pain, as can some **creams**.

## What can I do if I suffer from chronic pain?

Firstly, understand it's not normal to be constantly feeling pain. If you do, consult your doctor.

If you notice you're more irritable, angry or depressed, or if anxiety is bothering you, don't waste any time: Consult a psychologist or other specialist, or read books addressing the issue.

Make sure you have a healthy lifestyle. This includes regular deep sleep, a balanced diet, daily exercise, and no more than a moderate consumption of alcohol.

Remember, chronic pain can be managed and assuaged.

**The sooner you do something about it, the sooner you're likely to feel better!**