

# PAIN MANAGEMENT

**Respect pain: “Listen to your body when it whispers to you, Don’t wait for it to scream”.**

**It’s much easier to reduce a little pain than a great deal of pain.**

Many people experience ongoing pain as part of their daily lives. Pain maybe shortlived due to a recent injury or might be a symptom of ongoing illness (over 3 months). This leaflet is to help you understand your pain and provides you with some tips and strategies to help manage it. This is not designed to replace medical advice but to be used in partnership with advice from your medical team and healthcare professionals.

## Many factors might be causing your pain such as:

- An underlying disease e.g. inflammation damage to your joints, tissues, nerves, organs or insufficient blood flow.
- Tense muscles - our bodies naturally tense around an area that hurts to protect this area.
- Less active or weak muscles (also known as muscle deconditioning).
- Lack of sleep or poor quality sleep can result in your pain being worse or you may find it more difficult to cope.
- Stress, anxiety and emotions can all make your feelings of pain seem worse.
- Medications; side effects may include pain, Speak to your doctor if you are worried about side effects.
- Sometimes pain does not appear to have an underlying cause.



## Pain Management Strategies

**1. KEEPING A PAIN DIARY:** This is a great place to start - it allows you to get a clear understanding of how your moods, activity and medical conditions affect your pain. Try to complete this over a number of days (weekdays and weekends). Your pain diary can be re-visited at any time if pain symptoms become worse. It is also useful to bring to medical appointments if you are going to discuss pain with your doctor.

Here’s an example:

Date	Time	Description of the activity	Rate of pain (0-10) 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst	Description of your emotion	Did you do anything to alleviate the pain?

**2. EFFECTIVE PACING:** Means controlling your activity levels

- Be careful not to over do it. More damage is likely to occur if your joints are inflamed. Avoid over doing it on days when you don’t have pain.
- Complete your jobs/activities at a slower pace.
- Break up your tasks into smaller manageable pieces.
- Take rests regularly during periods of activity greater than 15 mins.
- Gradually build the amount of time you are spending on an activity.
- Plan your day out with a mix of rest and activity.

**3. GOOD BODY MECHANICS:** If your joints are continually kept in the wrong position this can strain muscles and ligaments and increase your pain and fatigue e.g use knees not back when lifting, consider the layout of your home or workplace to allow for good body mechanics eg.

- Move commonly used items, e.g. cups so that they are within your easy reach.
- Simplify some of your daily activities, e.g carry heavy objects with your two hands.
- Switch between sitting and standing for tasks.

**4. RELAXATION:** Stress and anger/frustration can lead to an increase in body tension and therefore an increase in pain. Including relaxation into your routine, for example breathing exercises, meditation, visualisation, sitting down to read a book can help manage the pain.

**5. THE POWER OF THE MIND:**

- Distraction or shifting your focus can help.
- Challenging your negative thoughts and trying to reframe into positive thoughts, E.g "My pain makes it impossible to do anything" can be reframed so that you can consider the things which you can still do. You can also think about how you could change the activities you found most enjoyable

**6. REST & GETTING A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP:** Some tips for a good night sleep can include creating a peaceful environment free from TV, mobile phones and having a nighttime routine. Look at your drinking or eating habits which can interfere with sleep pattern e.g caffeine or large meals in the evening, alcohol will effect the quality of your sleep.

**7. EXERCISING:** Little and often helps to maintain your joint range and muscle strength. Too much exercise can lead to increased pain or injury. Speak with your physiotherapist regarding an appropriate exercise plan for you.

**8. SOCIAL ACTIVITY:** Meeting with friends can help to improve your mood, create a distraction and give a sense of wellbeing.

**9. HEALTHY EATING:** Eating well balanced diets and keeping hydrated provides our bodies with keen nourishment for repair, energy and keeps your muscles and joints healthy. It also prevents any excess weight gain which can put unnecessary strain on your joints. If you have any concern about your weight, talk with your GP about a referral to a dietician.

**10. MEDICATION USE:** Speak with your GP or pharmacist about your medication, side effects, timings and dosages. A GP or pharmacy can also advise you regarding the use of heat, cold and massage which may help you manage your pain.

**11. CONNECT WITH OTHER PEOPLE:** Connect with other people who experience pain or the same condition through local support groups or Chronic Pain Ireland.

## Chronic Pain Ireland

**Tel:** 01 8047567

**Web:** [www.chronicpain.ie](http://www.chronicpain.ie)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/ChronicPainIreland](http://www.facebook.com/ChronicPainIreland)

