

Persistent pain

Persistent pain is very common. It affects millions of people in the UK. It can have a huge impact on your quality of life and can also affect the lives of your family and those around you.

What is persistent pain?

Persistent pain is usually defined as:

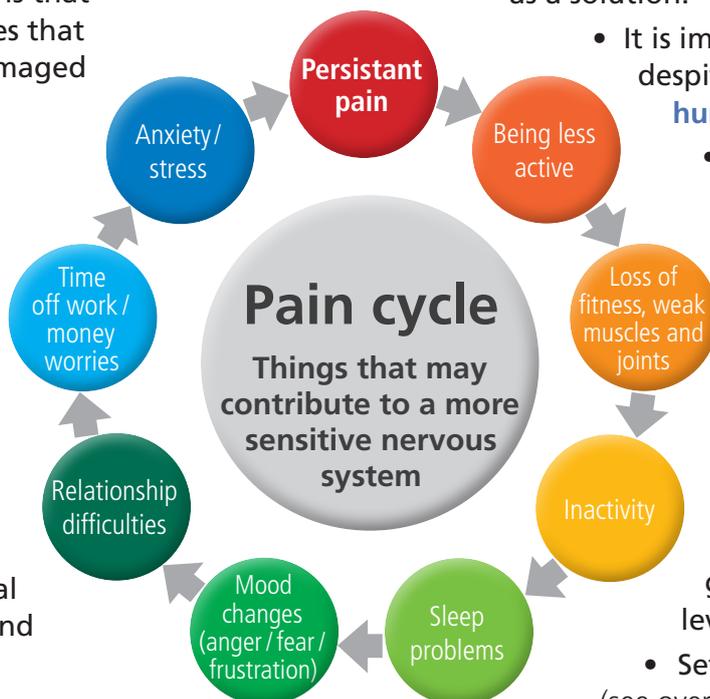
- Pain that persists for 3 months or more and may not respond to standard medical treatment.
- Pain that goes on over months or years as a result of a chronic condition.

Persistent pain may be felt in a specific part of the body, e.g. back, shoulders, or more generalised throughout the body.

Why may pain persist?

It is not clear why some people get persistent pain, even after minor injuries, while others recover as we would expect.

What we do know is that although the tissues that were originally damaged have healed, the signals that tell your brain about the pain have changed. The pain systems may have become more sensitive. The pain pathways have been put on **high alert** and therefore respond with pain to normal signals of stretch and pressure.



Things that may help you manage your pain better

- Understanding your pain. The following YouTube clip 'Understanding pain in 5 minutes' may be helpful - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4b8oB757DKc&feature=youtu.be>
- Reassurance that pain is real and you can do things to help you self manage it and feel more in control.
- Regular exercise to improve your flexibility, strength and stamina.
- Relaxation techniques to calm the mind and body.
- Socialising / having fun / continuing work / hobbies.

Management of persistent pain

- The following website may be helpful to you: www.paintoolkit.org
- Passive treatments can sometimes give short-term benefit and may be helpful as part of a management package but should not be seen as a solution.

- It is important to get on with life despite the pain. Remember that **hurt does not always equal harm.**

- You may have good and bad days.

- It is important not to do too much on a good day and too little on a bad day. This is known as boom and bust and may lead to less and less activity.

- Instead learn to pace activities. Pacing is a technique that you can use to gradually increase your activity level.

- Set yourself **SMART** goals (see over).

Simple – Measurable – Achievable – Realistic – Time limited

For example, your goal may be to walk to the shop. Start with a short walk and gradually increase the distance as you feel able. Set yourself a time limit, for example, 2 weeks and aim to have achieved the goal by that time.

This will lead to increased self-confidence, increased fitness and being more active which means **you** are ultimately **in control**. Start with what you can easily manage and build up slowly.

Try using this goal sheet to keep a record of your progress. If you are finding it hard to think of a goal ask yourself:

- “What do I really want to get back to?”
- “What did I use to enjoy?”
- “What would make my life a bit better now?”

GOAL	Target	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
e.g. Walking to shop	Walk 200 yards every day					

Choose a time of day that is convenient to you and try and complete the target at the same time every day. As soon as you have completed a target tick it off.

Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust accept no responsibility for pain or injury resulting from the use of these information sheets. If you experience an increase in your pain that does not settle, or any other adverse symptoms, please contact your GP or physiotherapist before continuing with the exercises.