

MEDICATIONS

What are the risks with medications?

All medications have some risk of side effects. Although some people benefit from higher doses, lower doses generally provide the best balance between pain relief and few side effects.

Weight gain can occur with certain pain medications, including gabapentinoids and antidepressants (about 2-4 kg).

Dizziness, sleepiness and nausea are other common side effects that can occur in 10-20% of people. Some side effects are temporary and will resolve after a few weeks.

Practical Tips



Make time to talk to your primary care provider about:

- Side effects you may be experiencing
- If your new medication is not helping

Can I become addicted to pain medications?

Most medications for chronic pain are not addictive. However, some medications (e.g., opioids) may result in addiction. This risk is about three percent in chronic pain patients taking prescribed opioids. The risk is higher in patients with a history of substance abuse.

Do I take these medications for the rest of my life?

With the help of exercise and other treatments, medication requirements can decrease over time. But for many patients, medications are needed long term. Treatments that are not helping should be stopped under the guidance of your primary care giver.

What about medical cannabinoids (e.g., marijuana or prescription sprays/pills)?

There is little high-quality research in most types of chronic pain. Some patients with nerve pain may benefit, but standard treatments should be tried first. Side effects are common.



What else can I do?

Mental Health: Mental illness and past trauma can affect chronic pain. Talking to a trusted health care provider is strongly encouraged.

Wellness: Emotions and stress can affect chronic pain and vice versa. Finding positive ways to manage stress and emotions can help manage pain.

Follow-up: Regular follow-up with your primary care provider is helpful to manage chronic pain. Talk to them about your options.

Patient Resources

- 1 **RxFiles**
<https://cutt.ly/RxFilesPtInfo>
- 2 **Tame the Beast**
tamethebeast.org
- 3 **Quebec Association of Chronic Pain**
douleurchronique.org

Scan the QR code for more resources



1

2

3

Illustrations: <https://storyset.com/>

Managing Chronic Pain

Answering questions for patients with osteoarthritis, nerve pain, or low back pain



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CHRONIC PAIN: EXPECTATIONS

Can chronic pain be improved?

You are in charge of identifying your goals for managing chronic pain. Your primary care provider can identify different treatment options for you and what realistic expectations may look like.

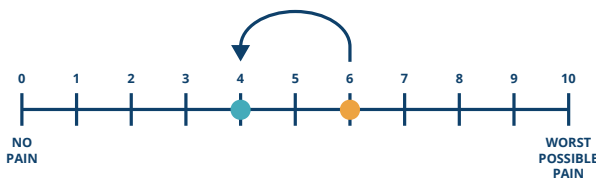
Examples of goals:

- Moving better
- Increasing day-to-day activities
- Increasing ability to do activities you enjoy



For patients with chronic pain, it is unlikely that pain will completely resolve but there are ways to manage it. Realistic goals can include improvement in function and a 30 percent improvement in pain.

Example: if your pain is 6 on a scale of zero to ten, treatment may be able to improve this score to a 4.



Chronic pain is best managed by using different treatments at the same time. Example: physiotherapy with medication.



TREATMENT OPTIONS

What are the best treatments to manage chronic pain?

Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to improve pain for patients with chronic low back pain and osteoarthritis. Two out of every three patients can have pain improvement!

Practical Tips

- Choose an activity that you can stick with. One activity is not better than another
- Pick something you enjoy! Examples: swimming, biking, or yoga
- Pain improvement can occur without weight loss



Exercise is safe! Start slowly and increase activity at your own pace. This approach will minimize injury and make the activity more manageable.

There are many resources available for people with chronic pain – even for people who think they cannot exercise.

Recommended Exercise Programs

- 1 **Gentle Movement @ Home**
<https://cutt.ly/gentlemovement>
- 2 **Andrea Furlan Exercises**
<https://cutt.ly/AFExercise>



What other non-medical treatments are helpful?

Counselling is helpful for some patients to improve pain. Cognitive behavioural therapy or mindfulness-based stress reduction are two recommended approaches.



I can't afford a gym membership or visits to the psychologist. Now what?

There are many exercise options that are free. Check out the two examples given: Gentle Movement @Home and Andrea Furlan Exercises.

Talk to your primary care provider about options for counselling.

Do I need to take pain medications every day?

Many medications need to be taken every day to improve pain.

Some quick acting medications (e.g., anti-inflammatory pills, creams, or injections) can be taken as needed, for pain flares or to help you do certain activities.