

Chronic Pain

This information is at http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health_and_medical/disorders/chronic_pain.htm and is provided by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke of the US Government's National Institutes of Health.

To obtain a free copy of this document, go to www.masterdocs.com

What is Chronic Pain?

While acute pain is a normal sensation triggered in the nervous system to alert you to possible injury and the need to take care of yourself, chronic pain is different. Chronic pain persists. Pain signals keep firing in the nervous system for weeks, months, even years. There may have been an initial mishap -- sprained back, serious infection, or there may be an ongoing cause of pain -- arthritis, cancer, ear infection, but some people suffer chronic pain in the absence of any past injury or evidence of body damage. Many chronic pain conditions affect older adults. Common chronic pain complaints include headache, low back pain, cancer pain, arthritis pain, neurogenic pain (pain resulting from damage to the peripheral nerves or to the central nervous system itself), psychogenic pain (pain not due to past disease or injury or any visible sign of damage inside or outside the nervous system).

Is there any treatment?

Medications, acupuncture, local electrical stimulation, and brain stimulation, as well as surgery, are some treatments for chronic pain. Some physicians use placebos, which in some cases has resulted in a lessening or elimination of pain. Psychotherapy, relaxation and medication therapies, biofeedback, and behavior modification may also be employed to treat chronic pain.

What is the prognosis?

Many people with chronic pain can be helped if they understand all the causes of pain and the many and varied steps that can be taken to undo what chronic pain has done. Scientists believe that advances in neuroscience will lead to more and better treatments for chronic pain in the years to come.

What research is being done?

Clinical investigators have tested chronic pain patients and found that they often have lower-than-normal levels of endorphins in their spinal fluid. Investigations of acupuncture include wiring the needles to stimulate nerve endings electrically (electroacupuncture), which some researchers believe activates endorphin systems. Other experiments with acupuncture have shown that there are higher levels of endorphins in cerebrospinal fluid following acupuncture. Investigators are studying the effect of stress on the experience of chronic pain. Chemists are synthesizing new analgesics and discovering painkilling virtues in drugs not normally prescribed for pain.

The following items on chronic pain are listed at
http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health_and_medical/disorders/chronic_pain.htm:

Organizations

American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA)
P.O. Box 850
Rocklin, CA 95677-0850
ACPA@pacbell.net
<http://www.theacpa.org>
Tel: 916-632-0922 800-533-3231
Fax: 916-632-3208

American Council for Headache Education
19 Mantua Road
Mt. Royal, NJ 08061
achehq@talley.com
<http://www.achenet.org>
Tel: 856-423-0258 800-255-ACHE (255-2243)
Fax: 856-423-0082

National Headache Foundation
820 N. Orleans
Suite 217
Chicago, IL 60610-3132
info@headaches.org
<http://www.headaches.org>
Tel: 773-388-6399 888-NHF-5552 (643-5552)
Fax: 773-525-7357

National Foundation for the Treatment of Pain
P.O. Box 70045
Houston, TX 77270
markgordon@paincare.org
<http://www.paincare.org>
Tel: 713-862-9332
Fax: 713-862-9346

Mayday Fund [For Pain Research]
c/o SPG
136 West 21st Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10011
mayday@maydayfund.org
<http://www.painandhealth.org>
Tel: 212-366-6970
Fax: 212-366-6979

American Pain Foundation
201 North Charles Street
Suite 710

Baltimore, MD 21201-4111
info@painfoundation.org
http://www.painfoundation.org
Tel: 888-615-PAIN (7246) 410-783-7292
Fax: 410-385-1832

Related NINDS Publications and Information

- ***Low Back Pain Fact Sheet***

Low back pain fact sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Pain-Hope Through Research***

Information booklet on pain compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Peripheral Neuropathy Information Page***

Peripheral Neuropathy information sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Trigeminal Neuralgia Information Page***

Trigeminal Neuralgia (tic doloureux) information sheet compiled by NINDS, the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

- ***Central Pain Syndrome Information Page***

Central Pain Syndrome information sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Information Page***

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (also called Causalgia and Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome) information page compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Fact Sheet***

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS)/Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome fact sheet compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Shingles Information Page***

Shingles information page compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Shingles: Hope Through Research***

An informational booklet on shingles compiled by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

- ***Amid Ongoing Controversy, Researchers Find Opiates Relieve Chronic Pain From Nervous System Damage***

May 2003 news summary on recent findings that opioid drugs can be effective in treating chronic pain.

- ***Study Links Chronic Pain to Signals in the Brain***

January 2003 news summary on proteins that play a role in chronic pain.

- ***Neurobiology of Craniofacial/Deep Tissue Persistent Pain***

Summary of symposium on Neurobiology of Craniofacial/Deep Tissue Persistent Pain held March 13-14, 2002.

- ***Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy/ Complex Regional Pain Syndromes (CRPS): State-of-the-Science***

A workshop on Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy/ Complex Regional Pain Syndromes (CRPS): State-of-the-Science, December 15, 2001.

- ***NINDS Seeks Patients with Phantom Pain***

Lay-language descriptions of new NINDS program announcements, requests for applications, and clinical studies seeking patients.

Provided by:

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

NINDS health-related material is provided for information purposes only and does not necessarily represent endorsement by or an official position of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke or any other Federal agency. Advice on the treatment or care of an individual patient should be obtained through consultation with a physician who has examined that patient or is familiar with that patient's medical history.

All NINDS-prepared information is in the public domain and may be freely copied.

Credit to the NINDS or the NIH is appreciated.

Reviewed 07-01-2001

This document is provided as a service to the public by TMT (Taylor MicroTechnology, Inc.). TMT does not provide medical advice to you. TMT does inform you of publicly available medical information. However, please realize that the possible diagnoses provided may not include the cause of your own pain, and that a reliable diagnosis can only be obtained by contacting your own health care provider. For details of the Content Disclaimer and Legal Disclaimers regarding materials provided by TMT, see www.masterdocs.com/disclaimer.htm.