



Understanding persistent pain

What is pain?

Pain is produced by your brain. Short-term pain can be helpful to avoid injury for example by taking your hand off a hot stove before you burn your skin. Pain can give your tissues time to heal, for example by encouraging you to rest after surgery or an accident.

What is persistent pain?

Persistent pain is long-term pain, which means it has usually lasted at least 3 months. It is sometimes called chronic pain.

Persistent pain is always unhelpful; it is over-protective giving unnecessary warning signals.

Persistent pain can start in many different ways but the reasons are often not clear.

How do you know when your pain system has become sensitive?

- You may notice your pain spreads or comes on without warning.
- Your body feels odd and it's hard to move properly.
- Old injuries may start to hurt again.
- You may notice you are sensitive to minor knocks and even touch.

The longer pain goes on, the more this occurs

Recent scientific discoveries suggest many, many changes take place in the brain and spinal cord which results in the generation of unnecessary pain signals.

A useful way to think about pain is as an alarm system...

Normal day to day activities do not trigger an alarm, it is set-up to be sensitive to an intruder, or someone breaking a window.



In persistent pain conditions, the alarm system re-sets itself so that when a leaf blows it triggers the alarm.



How is persistent pain treated?

Persistent pain often does not respond to treatment such as pain medicines, including opioids.

New knowledge has revolutionised the way we think about pain and now the focus is more on the whole person and taking an active approach.

Taking practical steps to reconnect to life can make a real difference.

“I now have to deal with the situation I’m in and move forward. To find the lightest way over heavy ground”

Discussion forum participant, male and lived with pain for unknown, but >8 years

“With untreatable, chronic pain, you have to learn that you're stuck with it - and the medical establishment can help by being honest. Then change your life: the Pain Management is *Life Management*”

Discussion forum participant, female 47 years old and lived with pain for 31 years

Find out about Louise and her experience of living with pain and how she thought opioid medicines were helping her until she decided and took steps to adjust to manage her pain differently: click [here](#), or scan the code below:



To find out more about some steps you can take read the leaflet *Ten Footsteps. Your journey to living well with pain*, click [here](#) or scan the code below with your phone camera:

