Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network

A guide about chronic pain

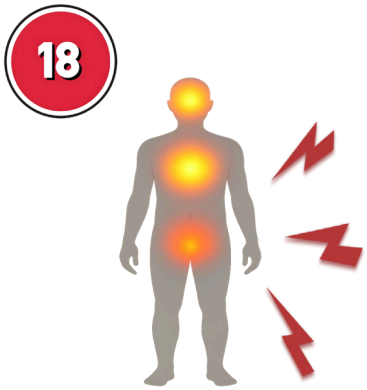
A booklet for patients, carers, family members and friends



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Thank you to everyone who helped with this booklet.



Who is this guide for?

This guide is for adults with chronic pain.

It can also help family members, friends, and carers.



What is this guide about?

This guide explains chronic pain.

It tells you about treatments and support.

What is chronic pain?



Chronic pain lasts more than three months.

It can start after getting hurt or ill.

Sometimes it just happens.

How does chronic pain affect life?



It can make moving hard.



It can make sleeping hard.

It can affect how you feel.



How can others understand your pain?

Tell people how pain affects you.

This can help them understand.

Can medicines help with chronic pain?



Some medicines help pain that lasts a short time.

They may not help pain that lasts a long time.

Some medicines can cause side effects.



What other things can help with chronic pain?

Feeling sad or tired can make pain feel worse.



Small changes can help.

You can eat well.

You can move more.



How can you make choices that matter to you?

Talk about what matters to you.

Talk about what might help.

How can everyday activities help?



Doing things you enjoy can help your mood.

This can include getting up and getting dressed.



This will not make the pain go away.

This will help you do things that matter to you.

How can talking therapies help with chronic pain?



Talking therapies can help you cope with pain.

Talking therapies mean talking time with a trained therapist.

Talking therapies can also be called **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)** or **CBT** for short.

They can teach you coping skills.

They can help you think about pain in a different way.



Mindfulness teaches you to notice what is happening right now.

It may help you feel less stressed.

How can eating well help?



Eating healthy food can help your body.

It might ease pain for some people.

How can physical therapies help?

How can exercise and movement help?

Moving your body can help.



Small amounts of movement can help.

A physiotherapist can help you choose safe exercises.

How can hands-on therapies help?



Hands-on therapies use touch.

This can include massage.

It can also include gentle movement of places like neck, back, arms and legs.



Is TENS worth trying?

A **TENS** machine uses small electrical pulses through patches on leads attached to a machine that are placed on your skin.



These pulses may help reduce pain.

TENS is low risk.

Ask a healthcare professional how to use it safely.

Can complementary therapies help?



These are treatments that are not usually medical.

They include **acupuncture** or **herbal remedies**.

Acupuncture is when small thin needles are put in parts of the body to relieve pain.

Herbal medicines – made using plants or parts of plants which can help with pain.



Ask a healthcare professional before you try them.

They can help you check they are safe for you.

They can also help you understand that these treatments may not work for everyone.



These treatments might not be available on the NHS.

You may have to pay for them.



Can simple painkillers help?

Simple painkillers like **ibuprofen** may help short-term pain.

They may not help long-term pain.



Can strong painkillers help?

Opioids are strong painkillers.

They may not help long-term pain.

What is naloxone?



Naloxone is a medicine that can help if someone has taken too much opioid medicine.

It can save a life in an emergency.

Can medicinal cannabis help?



Medicinal cannabis is a medicine made from the cannabis plant.

It includes **THC** and **CBD**.

We do not know enough yet about how well it works for chronic pain.



Can antidepressants help?

An **antidepressant** is a medication supplied by a doctor to stop you for feeling sad.

Some **antidepressants** can help some types of long-term pain.



Ask a healthcare professional if they might help you.

Can creams, gels and patches help?



Creams, gels and patches are also called **topical treatments**.

Topical treatments go on your skin.

They may have fewer side effects than tablets.

Anti-inflammatory gels can help muscle or joint pain.

Capsaicin cream is made from chilli peppers.

It can calm pain signals.

Lidocaine plasters numb the skin.

They may help some types of nerve pain.



Can pain management programmes help?

These courses can help you learn ways to live with pain.



How can self-management help?



Self-management means finding ways to live well with pain.

How can peer support help?

Peer support is when people help each other.



How can digital support help?

Apps or websites may help you track pain and learn coping skills.

Where can I find out more?



These organisations can give you more information.

NHS inform

Information about pain.

Website: www.nhsinform.scot



Pain Association Scotland

Supports people living with pain.

Website: www.painassociation.co.uk

Phone: 0800 783 6059

Pain Concern

Information and support for people with pain.

Website: http://www.painconcern.org.uk

Phone: 0300 123 0789



You can use this page to write down any thoughts or questions you may have

Published | November 2026

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