



Developing Health
& Independence



PAIN MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK



HOW CAN MY DHI WORKER HELP?

Everyone's experience of pain is unique and how DHI helps you, will depend on your experiences and goals. DHI can support you with other aspects of your life, which can then help living with pain more manageable. At first it may not seem obvious that these things impact on your pain, however evidence shows that learning about pain, and improving quality of life can make life better. DHI can support you to develop a personal support plan, which could include:

- Accessing physical activity in the community
- Housing related support
- Benefits and money management
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health
- Learning about pain
- Accessing education, training and employment
- Improving sleep
- Community activities and social groups
- Finding a meaningful use of spare time
- Accessing specialist support including sexual violence, domestic violence and trauma-informed therapy

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How long-term pain works

It's obvious isn't it... If I hit my thumb with a hammer, pain signals are sent to my brain. But it's a lot more complicated than that...

Our hand will send a signal to our brain, but our brain interprets the signal and asks itself a couple of questions:

- Is this a threat to our body tissue – are we being damaged?
- Are there any other things going on that are more important that we need to take care of first?

Your brain then decides if it's going to generate pain to warn you and get your attention. Here are a couple of examples of the brain deciding not to generate pain:

- Krista DuChene finished a half-marathon to come third despite having a fractured femur.
- Jim Hopkins saved his wife from a burning building after he had broken his leg.

So, the mind decides when to generate pain

It is the brain that decides whether pain is generated and at what level and it does this by interpreting the signals it gets from all over the body. Sometimes it gets those signals wrong, or the signals themselves are wrong - you've most probably heard of phantom pain when amputees feel pain from limbs they no longer have. The brain can create pain when you are not in danger of damaging yourself. That pain is as real and no different in experience, than that caused by tissue damage.

Why is this important? To manage pain, you need to understand it and where it comes from. If you are worried about damaging your neck, lower back or other body parts you will stop doing things that can help you manage your pain (we'll come onto this later).



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

If you've had pain for over 3 months and your Doctor or Consultant has ruled out that damage is ongoing it indicates that the pain is no longer linked with actual damage to your body.

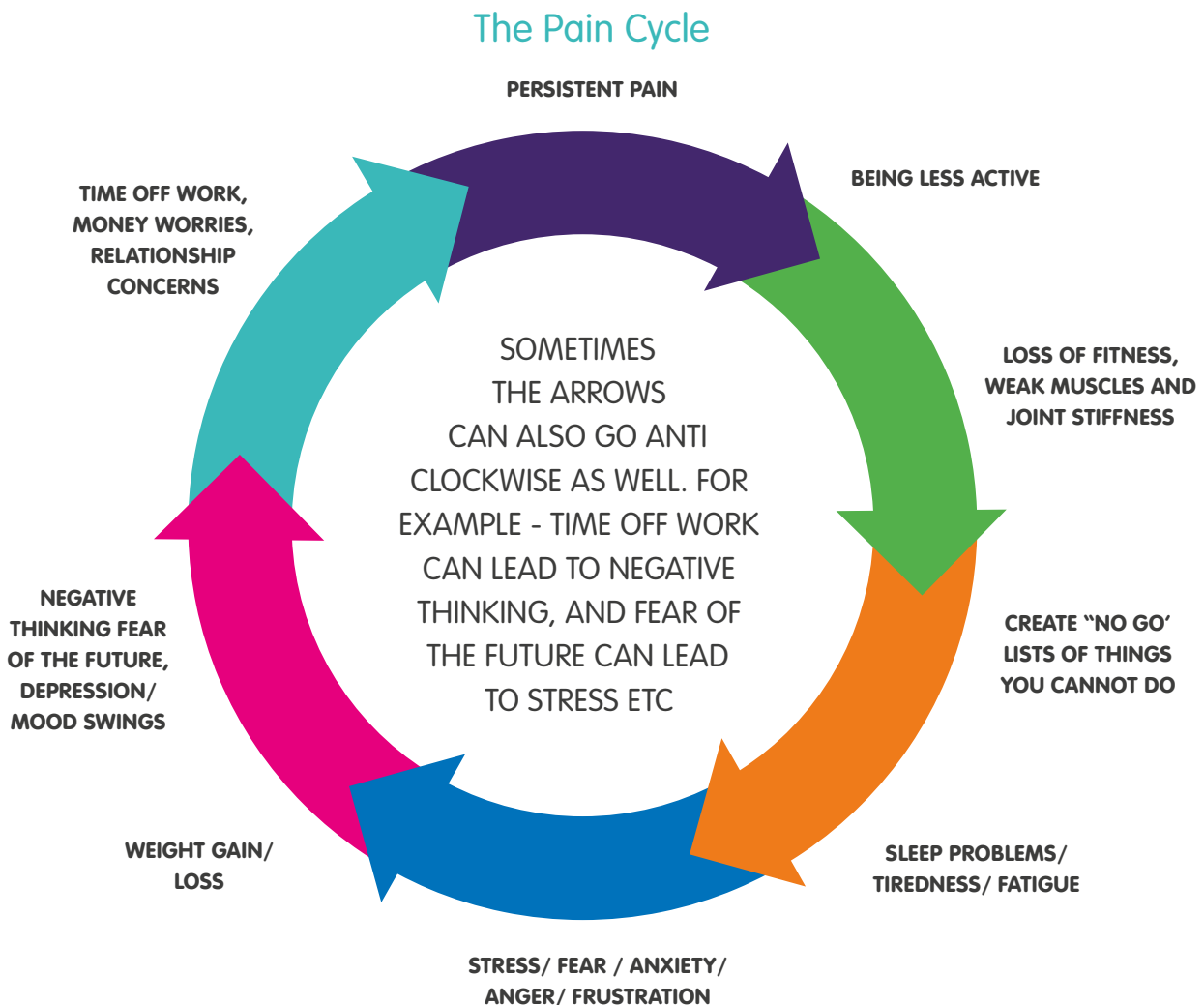
So, the things you would normally do in the short term to rest a damaged area will not work to give you any rest from the pain symptoms. Pain

is being triggered by activities or movements that really should not create pain as they pose no real threat to you. Unfortunately, you have become over sensitised to pain, in a way your central nervous system is running too hot.

This is called **Central Sensitization**. "When central sensitization occurs, the nervous system goes through a process

called wind-up and gets regulated in a persistent state of high reactivity. This persistent, or regulated, state of reactivity lowers the threshold for what causes pain and subsequently comes to maintain pain even after the initial injury might have healed."

So... we need to take a fresh look at how we deal with long term pain.





Painkiller side effects can include:

- Fuzzy head and poor memory
- Risk of overdose
- Increased appetite, weight gain
- Emotional numbing
- Constipation
- Low sex drive
- Compromised immune system
- A lack of interest in life
- Falls

A Note on Painkillers

For roughly 1 in 20 people (5%) painkillers work well, what is going on with the 95% of people who don't experience effective pain relief? If you'd like advice or a medication review, please speak to your GP or Pharmacist.

Tolerance

Put simply your body gets used to the effects of the painkillers and you require a higher dose to get the same effect. So over time you need increasing amounts to get the original pain relief (again and again). As this happens the undesirable side effects can increase.





SELF HELP FOR PERSISTENT PAIN

To generate your own self-help pack visit:
<https://www.dhi-online.org.uk/pain-management-portal>



Pain can affect just about every aspect of people's lives.

It can affect:

- The way people move
- How much they do
- How far they go
- How able they are to take part in activities
- How confident and optimistic they feel.
- Relationships with others
- How well they sleep or concentrate
- How much they enjoy life.

What can you do to help yourself?

Whilst it may not be possible to get rid of the pain, it is possible to significantly reduce the disability and distress it causes by: -

1. Setting goals

Setting goals for each day and for the longer term, can help keep the body and mind active. This also helps give direction to your recovery. In time, these goals can become more challenging, but it's helpful to break them down into small and manageable steps.

2. Keeping physically active and eating well

Research shows that people with persistent pain who keep active tend to feel better and can do more. When in persistent pain, movements or activities that can make pain worse do not necessarily involve further damage or injury. So being active may hurt but this does not mean you are getting injured or harmed. Physical activity can increase the level of endorphins (natural pain killers) in our body, reducing pain the natural way. Ask your GP about Healthy Lifestyle On Referral Schemes.

3. Psychological support If you are feeling anxious or depressed you can get psychological help to improve your mental health. See page 11 for further information.

4. Pacing

Carrying on physical activity to the point of unmanageable pain or exhaustion is rarely helpful. Taking regular breaks in activities, changing position, resting briefly between activities or doing stretches throughout the day can all help.

5. Relaxation

Practising relaxation techniques regularly can help to reduce persistent pain. Learning to relax can help you sleep, get good quality rest and cope well with stressful and difficult situations. There

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are many types of relaxation techniques and there may be classes available locally that can teach you relaxation.

6. Breathing correctly

Stress and pain can lead us to breathe incorrectly, taking short shallow breaths from our chest. This type of breathing can cause unpleasant symptoms such as tension, dizziness, racing heart, difficulties concentrating, chest tightness and pins & needles. The correct way to breathe is from the tummy not the chest. When you breathe in your tummy should move out a little, when you breathe out, your tummy should fall in slightly. Your upper chest should always stay still. Relaxed, slow breathing from the tummy helps you stay calm and relaxed. A lot of people with pain have said that learning to breathe like this was one of the most important things they learned.

7. Socialising

Having contact with people can play an enormous part in helping you feel better. Pain can make it hard to get out to see people or to join in with what they are doing, but social contact can be at home, over a cup of tea, within whatever limits you have. It has been shown that keeping in touch with friends and family is good for our overall health.

8. Enjoyment

Sometimes you may concentrate on what you must do and forget the enjoyable activities. Try to find the time to phone a friend or go out to the cinema, even if you have to leave halfway through. Be pleased with the things that you have accomplished. Try to include at least one enjoyable activity in your list of things to do every day. Fun and pleasure stimulate serotonin (known as the happiness hormone) in our body. Raising serotonin levels can reduce pain, improve sleep and our mood.

9. Distraction

Shift your attention onto something else so the pain isn't the only thing on your mind. Get stuck into an activity that you enjoy or find stimulating. Many hobbies (like photography, sewing or knitting) are possible even when your mobility is restricted.

10. Medicine

Medicines are often used for persistent pain and may give valuable relief. They are just one of the many tools in our 'toolbox' and you should use them alongside all the other tools. The aim should be to use the minimum number of medicines needed to allow you to increase your general activity and exercise. If you have any concerns or have not had a recent medication review, please speak to your GP or Pharmacist.



GETTING ACTIVE

If you're struggling with chronic pain, it can feel hard to be active and pain can make motivation a challenge. However, evidence shows that activity and exercise is helpful for chronic pain conditions. The good news is that it doesn't matter what type of exercise you do. Trying any activity you enjoy is the best way to start.

How much should I do? Most people find it is best to start off with a fun activity, little and often. You can then gradually build up your levels of fitness as you get used to the activity. First start out by working out your baseline – what can you do at the moment? Try to do that for 3 days. If that went well, increases of about 10% seem to work well for most people. Try increasing your activity in steps of half a minute and allow yourself at least three exercise sessions to get used to the increased level before increasing again.

Pain and flare ups

You might find to start with that the pain will still be there. However, over time you should find that you are able to do more without a flare up. It can be useful to record what you're able to do each week to see any progress.

Not ready for the gym? Exercise doesn't have to mean going to the gym or signing up for an exercise class. It might be that you do new activities whilst sat down, increase time walking around your house or go for a walk with friends. If you feel able to, it might be that you could dance to music in the house or try some light gardening. Whatever you enjoy and gets your body moving will start to help.

Not ready to get active? In fact, being inactive can sometimes lead to a cycle of more pain and loss of function. Being active helps to strengthen muscles, reduce stiffness and is good for your mental

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health too. Once you start small amounts of exercise, it can help build your confidence and help you realise that you can do it. This increases not only your confidence that you can exercise despite chronic pain, but also your general sense of self-esteem, knowing that you are doing all you can to make your body as healthy as it can be.

Some simple home exercises

Repeating an 'everyday' movement can help to build stamina. Remember to drink water and have plenty of space around you. Try these movements and set a baseline. Get advice from a healthcare professional or fitness instructor if you have concerns about starting a new exercise programme

- 1. Sit-to-stand:** Get up from a chair as smoothly as possible, and then slowly sit down again. Repeat.
- 2. Walk on the spot:** Lift each leg in turn. Choose how high to lift each leg and how fast to lift them. It is easier to start with a slow, small movement. Hold on to a steady surface to help you balance if needed.
- 3. Step-ups:** From the hallway, step up onto the first step with one foot and then the second. Step down again, using the same leg to lead down. Hold the banister to help you balance if needed. Practice some with each leg leading, if you can.
- 4. Reaching up:** Imagine you are reaching for something from a cupboard in front of you. Only reach as high as you can manage smoothly with good control of the movement without losing your balance.
- 5. Sit to stand:** Get up from a chair as smoothly as possible, and then slowly sit down again. Use your hands to support you on the chair if needed.

You can use this template to plan goals:

My current exercise baseline is

Activity type	Minutes

My activity and movement goals

Activity type	
Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Week 4	

HEALTHY EATING

These 6 practical tips cover the basics of healthy eating and can help you make healthier choices. You should try to eat a wide range of foods to make sure you're getting a balanced diet, and your body is receiving all the nutrients it needs. It's recommended that men have around 2,500 calories a day (10,500 kilojoules). Women should have around 2,000 calories a day (8,400 kilojoules).

1. Base your meals on higher fibre starchy carbohydrates. Starchy carbohydrates should make up just over a third of the food you eat. They include potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and cereals. It's best to choose higher fibre or wholegrain varieties, such as wholewheat pasta, brown rice or potatoes with their skins on.
2. Eat lots of fruit and veg. It's recommended that you eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and veg every day. They can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced.
3. Eat more fish, including a portion of oily fish. Fish is a good source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals. Aim to eat at least 2 portions of fish a week, including at least 1 portion of oily fish.
4. Cut down on saturated fat and sugar. You need some fat in your diet, but it's important to pay attention to the amount and type of fat you're eating. There are 2 main types of fat: saturated and unsaturated. Too much saturated fat can increase the amount of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk of developing heart disease. Sugary foods and drinks are often high in energy (measured in kilojoules or calories), and if consumed too often can contribute to weight gain. They can also cause tooth decay, especially if eaten between meals.
5. Stay hydrated. You need to drink plenty of fluids to stop you getting dehydrated. The government recommends drinking 6 to 8 glasses every day. This is in addition to the fluid you get from the food you eat. All non-alcoholic drinks count, but water, lower fat milk and lower sugar drinks, including tea and coffee, are healthier choices.
6. Make time for breakfast. Some people skip breakfast because they think it'll help them lose weight. But a healthy breakfast high in fibre and low in fat, sugar and salt can form part of a balanced diet, and can help you get the nutrients you need for good health.

It's important to ensure you're getting a balanced diet, and your body is receiving all the nutrients it needs





MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TOO

Mental health directly affects our overall health and wellbeing, impacting our quality of life and our ability to work. Having good mental health helps us relax more, achieve more and enjoy our lives more.

Visit: <https://www.dhi-online.org.uk/pain-management-portal> for lots of ideas on how to improve your mental health.

Who to contact in a mental health crisis

If you are concerned someone is in immediate danger contact the police or ambulance service on 999. If you are depressed or anxious your doctor may be able to help you or refer you to other services, including specialist services for people experiencing severe mental ill health.

Who you can talk to if you are distressed or thinking about self-harm or suicide/in a crisis:

- Samaritans 24/7:** freephone 116 123
- Crisis Text Service 24/7:** Text SHOUT to 85258
- Anxiety UK:** 03444 775 774 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm)
- Mind:** 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm)
- SANEline:** 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4pm-10pm)
- National Suicide Prevention Helpline:** ... 0800 689 5652 (daily 6pm-12am)

Emergency professional support

- Crisis Team 24/7:** 0117 378 4250
- NHS 111:** Call 111 and select mental health option
- Ambulance 24/7:** 999



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