

Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain

Information for the public

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Chronic pain: the care you should expect

Pain that lasts for more than 3 months is known as chronic or persistent pain. It is common, affecting between 3 and 5 in every 10 people. Chronic pain can be caused by an underlying condition (for example, arthritis or endometriosis). This is known as chronic secondary pain. But in many cases the cause of the pain is unclear; this is called chronic primary pain. Chronic pain can be difficult to treat because there is no one treatment that works well for everyone. Chronic pain is often distressing and difficult to live with. It can seriously affect people's quality of life.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with chronic pain, and their families and carers, by helping healthcare professionals to:

- get a better understanding of how a person's life affects their pain and how pain affects their life, including their work and leisure time, relationships with family and friends, and sleep
- recognise and treat a person's pain as valid and unique to them
- give clear information about the benefits and risks of treatments so people can decide what's right for them
- work more closely with people to agree a care and support plan.

Making decisions together

Decisions about care and support are best when they are made together. Your health and care professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what would you like to prioritise in your care and support plan?
- What are the benefits and risks of the treatments available?
- What is the likely long-term outlook for your pain and how might this affect your options?

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by chronic pain and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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