

## What is pain?



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According to the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) pain is an unpleasant sensory and EMOTIONAL experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage<sup>1</sup>.

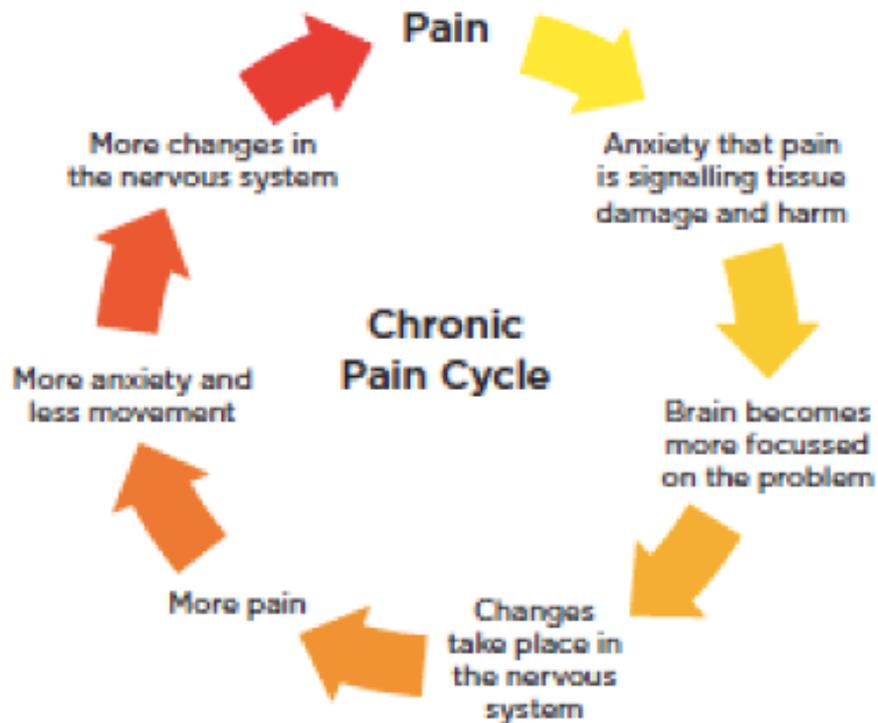
Aside from pain being a physical sensation, it is a feeling that is influenced by attitude, beliefs, personality and social factors, affecting emotional and mental wellbeing.

Pain can feel sharp stabbing, dull ache, throbbing, stinging, sore, pinching and many more. Can be consistent or it may get triggered by different movements. Pain can be localized where it affects only a certain part of the body or affect the whole body.

Pain can be categorised into **acute pain** that only lasts for a short period of time such as after surgery or trauma. When an area of the body is injured, the signals from the injured site sends messages to the brain, which the brain interprets as pain, in order to warn the body to seek help. This type of pain improves as the body heals.

Pain that lasts beyond tissue healing time and is present for more than three months is known as **chronic pain**. It can last post a surgery, trauma or a condition or even exist without a clear reason. This is where it is a disease on its own with changes to the central nervous system<sup>2</sup>. Figure 1 illustrates the cycle of chronic pain and its effects on psychology and the nervous system.

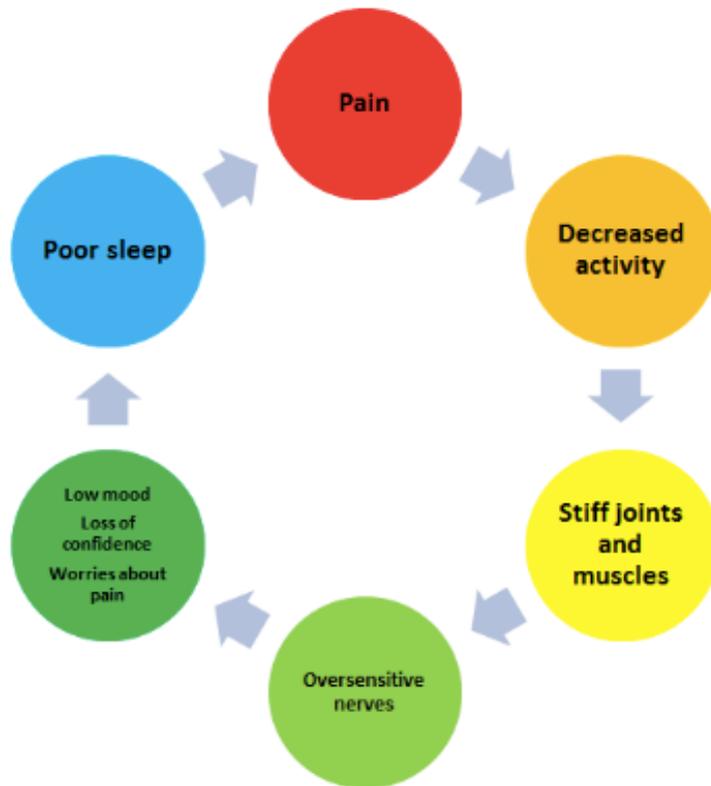
**Figure 1. Chronic pain**



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Every individual experienced pain differently even if they have the same pain condition. Some people ignore their pain while others are quick to report it and act on it. Many people also worry about their pain and emotional reactions can be dangerous if it stops physical activity. Figure 2 outlines the outcomes of poor activity due to pain.

**Figure 2. Pain and its effects**



Retrieved from: <https://www.pat.nhs.uk/what-is-persistent-pain.htm>



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You can manage your pain by pain-reducing medications and speaking to your doctor however, overtime your body will become non-responsive to those medications. Physiotherapists can help you manage your pain by prescribing exercises specific to you and encouraging you to stay active. Not only does exercise trigger your body's natural production of pain relief but also help you maintain a healthy weight<sup>1</sup>. Having a healthy weight is not only good for your general body fitness but also less pain on your knees, back, hips and feet.

**References:**

1. Pain: You Can Get Help. (2019). Retrieved 26 November 2019, from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/pain-you-can-get-help>
2. What Is Pain/Types of Pain Treated? (n.d.). Johns Hopkins Medicine. Retrieved August 14, 2013, from [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/pain/blaustein\\_pain\\_center/patient\\_care/what\\_is](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/pain/blaustein_pain_center/patient_care/what_is)

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