



“Pain affects more Americans than diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined”

WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

Everyone feels pain from time to time. Pain is an important signal from your body telling you something is wrong. As your body heals, the pain goes away.

Chronic pain is different. Your pain continues for weeks, months, even years beyond an injury or illness. It can affect your well-being, ability to function, and your quality of life. Simply put, chronic pain is pain that exists when it should not.

WHAT CONDITIONS CAUSE CHRONIC PAIN?

Sometimes chronic pain can begin without an obvious cause. For many people it starts with an injury or health condition.

Common causes include:

- Past injuries or surgeries
- Spinal issues
- Arthritis
- Fibromyalgia
- Nerve damage
- Headaches
- Cancer
- Autoimmune diseases

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF CHRONIC PAIN?

Symptoms of chronic pain can be continuous or periodic and range from mild to severe.

The pain can feel like:

- Throbbing
- Shooting
- Burning/Stinging
- Squeezing
- Sore/Stiff

Other symptoms include:

- Low energy
- Trouble sleeping
- Mood changes
- Weakness

TREATMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN

MENTAL HEALTH

Chronic pain can take a toll on your daily life and prevent you from doing activities you need or like to do. The impact on your mental well-being can lead you to feel angry, depressed, and/or frustrated.

Emotions play a role in pain severity. Having outlets to manage your mental health is a crucial part of managing your pain.

Options include:

- Seeing a therapist who specializes in pain
- Mindful meditation and relaxation
- Using positive coping mechanisms

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Non-medication based treatment plays a strong role and may be used alone or in combination with medication to enhance pain relief.

Always talk with your doctor about starting a new regimen.

Options include:

- Exercise
- Massage therapy
- Hot/cold therapy
- Acupuncture
- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Physical therapy
- Bio feedback

MEDICATION

Medications used to treat pain largely depend on your cause of pain, symptoms, and severity. For example, certain medications may work better for nerve pain, and others might work better for inflammation.

Commonly recommended medications include:

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Gabapentin or pregabalin (Lyrica®)
- Certain antidepressants
- Topical lidocaine patches
- Tramadol
- Opioids

SEEING YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR CHRONIC PAIN

- When evaluating your pain, it is important to consider what causes your pain, what it feels like, where the pain is located, what makes it worse or better, how often it occurs, and how it affects your well-being.
- Always discuss the risk versus benefits of starting a new treatment regimen.
- Whenever starting a new therapy, always set goals with your doctor about pain relief expectation and set-up a timeline for progress.
- Consider seeing a pain specialist doctor. Pain specialists focus entirely on your pain management and work closely with you to create an individualized treatment plan.

TREATMENT GOALS

Being completely pain free is very unlikely when you suffer from chronic pain.

Goals for treatment should include:

- Making your pain manageable
- Maintaining or improving function
- Decreasing your perception of pain
- Improving your quality of life

We care about your health and well-being and our staff of registered nurse care managers, mental health professionals, wellness coaches, and clinical pharmacists are here to help. If you have questions, please call 855-586-2568, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. MT.