

**Practical Applications** Using heat or cold packs regularly, or TENS machines (which are available in community pharmacies) can help to make your pain more manageable.

**Get some gentle exercise** Simple activity (such as walking, swimming or light gardening) helps to lessen pain by stretching stiff and tense muscles.

**Learn to Relax** Relaxation can help to control your pain. Learning a relaxation technique (such as Mindfulness or Yoga) and setting aside time each day to practice it can reduce pain and help you feel more in control.

**Breathing Exercises** Try to control your breathing by breathing gently into your tummy rather than taking rapid, shallow breaths from your chest. This will help you to feel more in control and will prevent muscle tension or anxiety from worsening your pain.

**Sleep well** Evidence suggests that not getting enough sleep can worsen pain. Try to establish a good sleep routine; go to bed at the same time each night, and get up at a regular time in the morning.

**Distract yourself** An activity which you enjoy and needs some concentration will shift your attention to something else other than your pain.

**Communication** Get out of the house and don't lose contact with people - speak to family members, or catch-up with friends and tell them how you feel.

**Education** Increase your knowledge about pain and coping strategies by visiting the websites opposite.

## Where can I get more information about Pain Management strategies?

### NHS Lothian Pain Management Programme

[https://services.nhslothian.scot/painmanagement/Pages/Pain-Management-Programme-\(AAH\).aspx](https://services.nhslothian.scot/painmanagement/Pages/Pain-Management-Programme-(AAH).aspx)

(This website has excellent links to a range of online support, videos and apps to explain and help manage pain, aid relaxation and stress, and guide exercise).

### NHS Inform

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/brain-nerves-and-spinal-cord/chronic-pain>

### NHS Mood Juice

<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

### Other websites

<https://www.painconcern.org.uk>

### Video

#### Understanding Pain in less than 5 minutes

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_3phB93rvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_3phB93rvI)

### Apps

<https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>

### Telephone Helpline Numbers

NHS Musculoskeletal (MSK) - **0800 917 9390**

Pain Concern - **0300 123 0789**

West Lothian  
Health & Social Care Partnership  
[www.westlothianhscp.org.uk](http://www.westlothianhscp.org.uk)



## Not Just Painkillers



## Your pain and how you can help it

This leaflet gives information on different types of pain and what can help to improve it

## Types of Pain

**Acute Pain** happens when you injure something - for example if you stub your toe or strain your back. It usually means something has been damaged and can last from a few minutes to a few weeks. It will usually settle down as the injury heals.

**Chronic Pain** carries on much longer even after the original injury has healed. It can continue for months or years.

Both types of pain can be mild or severe. What treatments will help the most with your pain will depend on whether it is acute or chronic.

## Painkillers

Medications can sometimes help reduce the pain, especially if it is acute. Sadly, they do not correct the problem that is causing the pain. Other types of treatment will usually be needed as well as painkillers.

## Types of Painkiller

**Simple painkillers** - such as Paracetamol

**Anti-inflammatory painkillers** - such as Ibuprofen, Diclofenac or Naproxen

**Opioid painkillers** - such as Codeine, Dihydrocodeine, Tramadol, Morphine or Oxycodone.

(Co-codamol is a combination of Paracetamol and Codeine. Co-dydramol is a combination of Paracetamol and Dihydrocodeine).

## Treating your pain

**Acute Pain** If you have injured something, for example, your back, painkillers can be helpful in the short term, particularly if pain is making it difficult to move or sleep. Other treatment might include heat or cold packs, gentle exercise or stretching. If you are unsure, seek advice from your GP or Physiotherapist.

**Chronic Pain** Chronic pain is more difficult to treat and will usually require a mix of different methods to control it.

There are no drug treatments that work consistently well for chronic pain. It is not always possible to completely take the pain away but the right sort of management should help to stop it interfering too much with your life.

## Opioid Painkillers

Opioid medicines are effective when taken in short courses for acute pain (for example, following a physical injury or after an operation). They are also helpful in longer term pain due to cancer.

They can have quite troublesome side effects, and the longer you take opioids the less effect they have as your body adapts and gets used to the pain-relieving effect.

Occasionally people in pain can become addicted to their opioid medication.

Research has shown little evidence that opioids are helpful for long term, chronic pain that isn't due to cancer.

## Side effects of Opioid Painkillers

Opioid painkillers can cause side effects which you should be aware of including:

- Constipation and nausea (feeling sick)
- Poor concentration and poor memory
- Problems sleeping, including snoring or difficulty breathing

When opioids are taken for longer periods of time, patients may also develop increased sensitivity to pain.

## How can I reduce or stop taking Opioid Painkillers?

Most people will be able to gradually taper off opioid medication after a short course of treatment.

If you are having difficulty with this you should seek advice from a Pharmacist or GP to get guidance on how to reduce or stop your medication safely.

## Other Approaches to Managing Pain

It is common for those with longer term chronic pain to feel that they have no control over pain and are unable to cope with it. Pain can affect people in lots of different ways - you might have difficulty managing at home or at work, enjoying your usual activities or time with family and friends, or have problems sleeping.

Small changes can make a big difference to how much your pain affects your quality of life. See overleaf for advice on simple things you can do which may help in dealing with pain: