Neurological Institute

Neurological Center for Pain
Section of Pain Medicine

Pain from an injury or disease usually subsides or disappears spontaneously or following medical care. But for 40 million Americans, there is no relief from the pain, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Their type of pain is unresponsive to conventional treatments. Living with it requires a change in mindset because chronic pain can evolve into a disability that affects daily activities, attitudes and relationships.

Chronic pain tears at the lives of patients as well as their families. Some long-time sufferers withdraw from activities that once gave them joy. They feel depressed, angry and helpless. This kind of hurt cannot be treated with single-service therapies.

A Partner in Chronic Pain Medicine

Long-term chronic pain sufferers need an intensive, comprehensive approach to treatment.

Cleveland Clinic’s Section of Pain Medicine is one of the longest-running, most innovative programs addressing the complexity of chronic pain. Our team of experts customizes a menu of behavioral and medical services to meet individuals’ needs so they can regain control over their lives and break free of the pain cycle.

Empowering Patients

Chronic pain can be associated with low back ailments, headache, fibromyalgia, nerve damage, diabetes, trauma, multiple sclerosis, gastrointestinal illness and other medical conditions. Since 1979, the Section of Pain Medicine at Cleveland Clinic has helped more than 6,000 people deal with chronic pain. Multifaceted treatment teaches coping strategies so that chronic pain sufferers gain the tools and support to enjoy life again.
A Team Approach

Research shows that complex pain is best managed by specialists who work together to tailor treatment. In the Section of Pain Medicine, a collaborative team of professionals addresses symptom reduction, functional restoration and quality of life improvement.

Our specialists include physicians, psychologists, addiction counselors, advanced practice nurses, physical and occupational therapists, and a full staff of dedicated nurses who deliver personalized care.

Treatment takes place in the W.O. Walker Center adjacent to Cleveland Clinic. If hospitalization is required, patients are admitted to Cleveland Clinic and transported to the Walker Center for therapy.

Customized Care for Chronic Pain

Following a comprehensive evaluation, our team of veteran pain specialists creates a rehabilitation plan that may include one or more of the following services.

Physical Rehabilitation

Improved flexibility, strength and endurance help chronic pain sufferers manage everyday tasks, return to work and even return to hobbies. Coping strategies are shared in a comfortable environment that includes:

- physical and occupational therapists
- modern pool, exercise equipment and biofeedback equipment
- yoga and guided stretching to improve flexibility
- programs designed to help patients regain physical strength and endurance

Pain and Stress Management Training

Relaxation techniques retrain the body to cope with pain and to reduce the muscle tension and neurological arousal that intensify pain. Individuals learn how to relax and adopt a mindset that allows them to reduce feelings of stress, depression and anxiety that worsen pain. The key is breaking the pain-stress-pain cycle with, among other tools:

- guided imagery
- relaxation training, including biofeedback and stress management techniques
- individual or group counseling

Medication Management

Patients are treated primarily with non-addictive medications to mitigate pain and associated medical problems such as depression, anxiety and insomnia. Those who have developed a medication dependence are individually treated through an intensive program.

Aftercare

Managing chronic pain is a continuous learning process. While individuals experience benefits from treatment, there is a risk of slipping back into old patterns. The Section of Pain Medicine’s monthly Aftercare Program reinforces principles learned during initial treatment and is provided free of charge. Participants can brush up on physical therapy techniques and join in therapeutic discussions.

“A Person, Not a Patient”

PENNEY COWAN | Rocklin, California

Founder and Executive Director, American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA)

Diagnosis: Fibromyalgia, which she endured for six years before she joined the pain management program’s first patient group (1979)

“We look to healthcare providers to fix us, but this program taught me that I had to share in the responsibility of dealing with and overcoming my pain. I needed to think of myself as a person, not a patient. I learned to redirect my thoughts away from my pain, reduce my sense of suffering and improve the quality of my life. I realized that I was not the only person living with pain, and I knew it was possible to live a full life in spite of the pain, so I created the ACPA, which now has more than 400 chapters worldwide. The pain program provided me with the road map to make this journey.”
Chronic Pain Rehabilitation Program

Through this specialized service, the Section of Pain Medicine reaches out to individuals who are emotionally and physically devastated by pain. This unique, three- to four-week program is intensive and interdisciplinary, with day-long clinics focused on physical rehabilitation, stress and pain control regimens, and medication management. The comprehensive approach helps jump-start participants’ long-term management of chronic pain.

Among the many services the Chronic Pain Rehabilitation Program offers are:

- physical and occupational therapy
- functional capacity evaluation to determine work ability
- coping skills training
- individual and group therapy to reduce depression, anxiety, anger and other emotions that result from pain and make it worse
- innovative relaxation therapy and other mind-body exercises
- monitored weaning of addictive substances
- addiction treatment services, if needed

After completing the program, individuals can choose to continue with the Section of Pain Medicine’s follow-up services.

Contact Us

Help is available for those who need it. Same day consultation appointments are available. To make an appointment or to refer a patient to Cleveland Clinic’s Section of Pain Medicine, call 216.636.5860 or toll free at 866.588.2264. Visit clevelandclinic.org/chronicpain for additional information.

Improved flexibility, strength and endurance help chronic pain sufferers manage everyday tasks, return to work and even return to hobbies.
“Pain Does Not Define Me”

MARU BERRÍOS | Guaynabo, Puerto Rico

Founder of an ACPA chapter in Puerto Rico and an Internet group for Chronic Pain Rehabilitation Program graduates

Diagnosis: Chronic back pain, which she suffered for seven years before she picked up a brochure that inspired her to try the program (2007)

“This program changed my life. I used to divide my life as ‘before pain’ and ‘after pain.’ Now, it’s ‘life before the program’ and ‘life after the program.’ I can do the small things now, and the big things, too: I can walk 10 kilometers in one hour, 36 minutes. I exercise daily, I’m making new friends, I’m out of the house, I’m jumping off airplanes – literally, skydiving – and having lots of fun! When people ask me how I’m doing, I don’t talk about my pain anymore. Pain does not define me. I’ve regained control of my life. I’m stronger now. And I’m free of addictive painkillers.”