

What causes pain? *Most pain is caused by damage to nerves or tissue. But, no matter what the cause, pain is a serious concern for patients and home health care providers.*

DAMAGE CAN COME FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

For example:

- A burn
- An infection
- Inflammation
- Arthritis
- Joint and muscle problems
- Effects of a tumor
- Blockage of the stomach or intestine

NERVES CARRY PAIN SIGNALS up the spinal cord to the brain. These signals travel on pathways that are separate from those carrying other sensations. Most pain control works by blocking these pain signals.

Pain control has become an important field of medicine. New knowledge has led to much more effective treatments.

Why learn about pain management?

Because pain can affect a person's:

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Pain can:

- Lead to decrease in strength and endurance
- Interrupt sleep
- Interfere with a healthy appetite
- Affect recovery from illness

RELATIONSHIPS

When a loved one is in constant pain, he or she may seem like a different person.

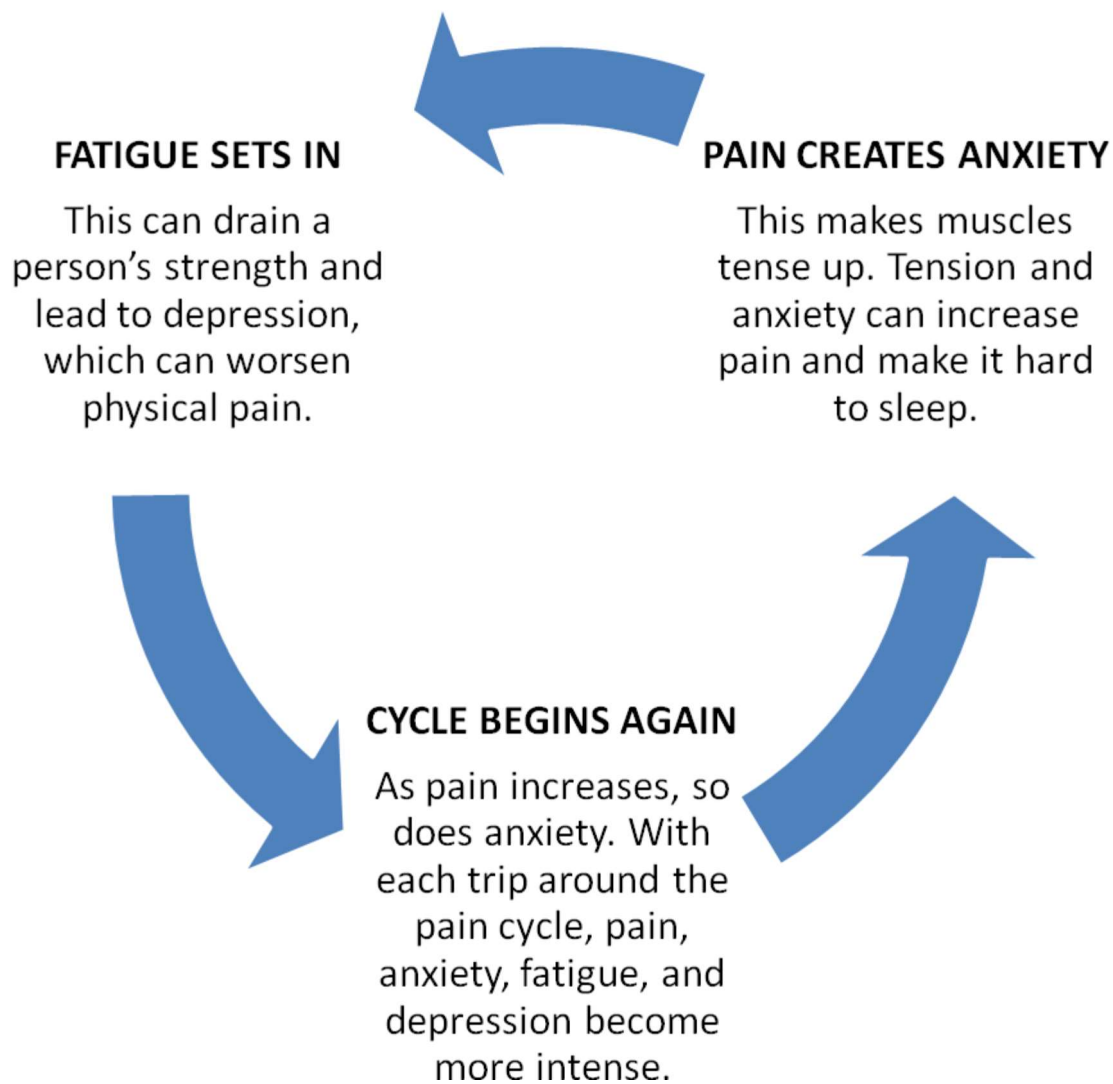
OUTLOOK

Long-term pain can make a person feel helpless – and hopeless. It can rob a person of interest in favorite activities. It can even take away the will to live.

Proper pain management can dramatically improve quality of life!

UNDERSTAND THE PAIN CYCLE

It's a trap that can be hard to escape.



TREATMENT CAN BREAK THE CYCLE

Don't wait for pain to become a problem. The longer pain goes untreated, the harder it is to relieve. Talk to your health care provider. He or she can help you with a treatment plan that's right for you.

MEDICATIONS CAN HELP CONTROL PAIN

Your health care provider may recommend different medications depending on your type of pain.

For example:

- Mild pain is often treated with nonprescription pain relievers, such as aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen. (These can cause serious side effects – use only as directed. No one under 20 years old, should take aspirin unless directed by a health care provider.)
- Moderate pain may require a mild opioid (a drug that relieves pain and causes sleepiness). Other types of medicines may also be used.

- Severe pain is usually treated by strong opioids, such as morphine.

SOME PATIENTS CONTROL HOW MUCH MEDICATION THEY TAKE

They can give themselves medication as needed by mouth, or with portable pumps that deliver medication into a vein, the skin, or the spine.

PATIENTS TAKE MEDICATION IN DIFFERENT WAYS

For example:

1. Pills
2. Patches
3. Suppositories
4. Injection into a vein, a muscle, the skin, or the spine

Pain medication works best when taken regularly and as directed – before pain becomes severe.

3 COMMON FEARS ABOUT PAIN MEDICATION

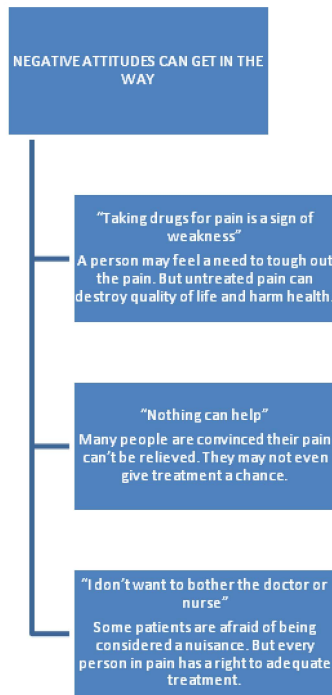
Some people refuse to consider helpful medication because they have fears about:

- A. **ADDICTION:** many patients worry about this when considering opioid use. Talk to your health care provider about your concerns. Ask about the risks and benefits of any medication you're considering. Be sure you understand your treatment plan and what warning signs to look out for.
- B. **SIDE EFFECTS:** side effects may vary from medicine to medicine and from person to person. Some people may experience
 - a. Constipation
 - b. Drowsiness
 - c. Dizziness
 - d. Stomach and intestinal problems
 - e. Heart or circulation problems
 - f. Skin reactions
 - g. Slowed breathing

Many side effects can be avoided or managed. Ask your health care provider what side effects to watch out for. Tell him or her if you experience any. Never exceed the recommended dosage for any medication, unless directed by your health care provider.

- **DRUG INTERACTIONS:** some medications should not be taken together. And some – including over the counter drugs – could be dangerous if taken with alcohol. But, patients, can avoid problems if they:
 - a. Ask what they should avoid while taking the medication
 - b. Don't take other medication – including over the counter drugs, and herbal or nutritional supplements – without a health care provider's or pharmacist's OK.

Using medication for pain doesn't make someone a "drug addict." It's very different from using drugs for pleasure.



GOOD COMMUNICATION IS VERY IMPORTANT

Never assume health care providers know you are in pain. If you hurt, say so.

- Describe your pain
- Discuss what makes your pain better or worse
- Explain how your pain limits you
- Report changes in your pain, or new pain

MORE HELP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST PAIN

Today, drugs are not the only option for managing pain. For example, pain may also be controlled by:

- ❖ TENS (Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)
- ❖ Nerve Blocks
- ❖ Radiation Therapy
- ❖ Surgery
- ❖ Biofeedback
- ❖ Relaxation Techniques
- ❖ Acupuncture
- ❖ Other Methods include exercise, use of heat/cold, massage, pressure, vibration, repositioning, immobilization, distraction, rest

For more information about alternative methods for treating pain consult your health care provider.