



YOU HURT. WE HELP.

Pain Management for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Sailors and Marines

Pain is the most frequent reason patients seek physician care in the United States, and more than 50 million Americans suffer from chronic pain.¹ The Health Promotion and Wellness Department at the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center is committed to helping you understand how pain can impact your daily life and function as well as the lives of your family members and caregivers. Effective pain management can help relieve pain and suffering, and improve your quality of life.

What is pain management?

Having a wound, illness, or injury may cause physical pain. Effective pain management for those who are wounded, ill, or injured is essential to quality of life and recovery. Pain can be “acute” or “chronic.” Acute pain lasts a short time and goes away after the source of pain heals, such as a cut; and chronic pain is a persistent pain that lasts beyond the healing of a wound, illness, or injury, such as nerve damage. Chronic pain can take a physical and emotional toll on individuals and their families which may impact recovery and optimal well-being.

Learning how to effectively manage pain through medication therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, or complementary and alternative medicine is important to achieving maximum functionality and an improved quality of life.

Pain can interfere with every aspect of your life.

Sometimes there is no pattern to when pain starts or gets worse. However, you can learn what things increase your pain, called “pain triggers.” Not enough sleep, stress, too much activity, certain medications, diet, etc. can all be pain triggers. The best way to understand your triggers is to pay attention to the types of things that bring on pain or make your pain worse.

Pain can get in the way of healing if it keeps you from getting restful sleep, eating the appropriate nutrients, or exercising for the right amount of time. It can impact various aspects of your life, including²:

- ▶ **Sleep:** Pain can make it difficult for you to fall asleep and can wake you up in the middle of the night; insufficient sleep takes a toll on your energy, mood, and ability to function.
- ▶ **Mood:** Pain can cause depression or anxiety; if you have pain with depression or anxiety, seek help before your symptoms worsen.
- ▶ **Ability to exercise:** Pain may limit the amount of physical activity you can do, which can then lead to unintentional weight gain.
- ▶ **Diet:** Pain can keep you from eating healthy which is important to support the healing process; you might find yourself skipping meals or grabbing whatever is available as food can be comforting or a temporary diversion from the pain.
- ▶ **Possible substance abuse:** Pain treatments may require prescription medications which can be effective, but can also lead to abuse if not taken as prescribed.
- ▶ **Quality of life:** Pain can keep you from being able to enjoy time with loved ones or from doing activities that are meaningful.

Understand your pain to get the best treatment.

Each person’s pain is unique, but understanding the type, intensity, and duration of your pain is important for getting the best treatment. Your health care provider will likely plan your pain management by starting with some important questions. You may be asked to describe how strong your pain is, what triggers it, how long it lasts, and whether it affects your emotions and your ability to do certain things or activities. Pain management plans can include medication, behavior modifications, physical therapy, or a combination of those tactics to help you cope with your pain. If your medical treatment facility has a pain management clinic, your health care provider may coordinate with them as well.

In addition, you can talk with your provider about integrative therapies that may be available to help you manage pain such as acupuncture, yoga therapy, etc.

Where to go for help.

Talk with your health care provider for more information on and assistance with pain management.

To learn how our programs can help facilitate recovery and strengthen resilience, visit us at WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX.

For more information on your local resources, contact:

¹ Pain Management Task Force Final Report. Office of The Army Surgeon General. <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a523510.pdf>. Published May 2010. Accessed August 2014.

² Managing Pain After Burn Injury. Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center. <http://www.msktc.org/burn/factsheets/Managing-Pain-After-Burn-Injury>. Published 2011. Accessed August 2014.



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