



# How to deal with, and prevent, physical pain

## Pain is a fact of life for most of us.

Whether it's a stubbed toe or full-body pain from a chronic condition, we all can relate to the discomfort. Pain is both a physical sensation and an emotion. You can choose how you react and treat your pain. That allows it to be bearable.

**1 in 5**  
adults experience  
pain daily

Most common spots?  
Back, hips, knees and feet<sup>1</sup>



## What is chronic pain?

Chronic pain<sup>2</sup> is any pain that lingers for three months or longer, with or without treatment.

It can be constant or come and go. It can occur in bones, joints, muscles or even nerves. It can be sharp and sudden or dull and achy. Causes range from injuries and strains to arthritis, migraines, cancer or autoimmune disease.

## Managing pain without medication

The good news is that most pain is treatable.

Consider discussing these supportive options with your doctor or other licensed healthcare professional:<sup>1,2,3</sup>

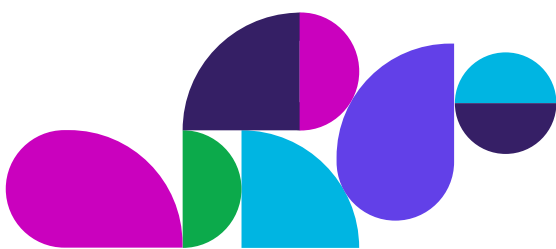
- Therapeutic massage
- Weight management—including a healthy meal plan
- Low-impact physical activity
- Stress reduction
- Acupuncture
- Mindfulness meditation and relaxation
- Mind-body practices like yoga or tai chi
- Getting enough rest and sleeping on a supportive mattress
- Working with a physical therapist and/or occupational therapist
- Finding mental health support and working on coping strategies with a trusted therapist



## Focus on what you can do, not what you can't

It is important for you and your doctor to understand the source of your pain as much as possible.<sup>2</sup> Then you can find the right ways to help alleviate the symptoms and their effects.

Living with chronic pain can be hard. It can be helpful to remember the parts of your body that don't hurt. Find gratitude in the things that are going well in your life.



## Maintain your mobility

Following a few simple guidelines can help you keep moving, hopefully without aggravating chronic pain or creating new pain.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

### ✓ Warm up and cool down

It can be as simple as stretching at the beginning and end of each day. It should be part of your usual exercise routine.

### ✓ Move every day

Regular movement keeps your muscles and bones strong, your joints lubricated and boosts your mood.<sup>5</sup> Consider low-impact exercises like walking, swimming, riding a bike, and even gardening and household chores.

### ✓ Listen to your body

Pace yourself and take breaks. Take note of what makes the pain worse and limit or avoid it. Find more activities that you enjoy and are comfortable doing.

### ✓ Single it out

If you have some soreness in specific spots, consider over-the-counter topical pain relievers or patches. These can create spot heat or irritation, so read and follow directions. Apply moist heat or a cold pack if it helps relieve symptoms. Take care not to place directly on the skin to avoid injury.

**Maintaining mobility—and dealing with and preventing pain—are goals you can reach by taking one step at a time.**

Learn how we can help support you on your wellness journey.  
To sign up or learn more, go to  
[Go.Livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New](https://www.livongo.com/STATEOFIOWA/New).

<sup>1</sup><https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33990113/#:~:text=Using%20a%20chronic%20pain%20module,%2C%20knee%2C%20or%20foot%20pain.>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.apa.org/monitor/2022/09/understanding-managing-pain>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.apa.org/topics/pain>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/opioids/healthcare-professionals/prescribing/nonopioid-pain-therapies.html>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness/improving-your-mobility>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/back-pain/7-ways-to-treat-chronic-back-pain-without-surgery>

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