



## ***How to Cope with Severe Chronic Pain***

Chronic pain can impact your physical and mental wellbeing.  
Learn how to manage chronic pain and begin to enjoy your life again.



Everyone experiences pain at one time in their life or another. However, chronic pain is different. Chronic pain can linger for weeks, months or even years after an injury.

Pain comes from a series of messages through your nervous system. Your brain processes the signal and sends out a message that you're hurt. Usually, the signal stops when your body repairs the injury. However, with chronic pain, the nerve signals keep alerting your brain you are hurt even if you are healed.

## ***What is chronic pain?***

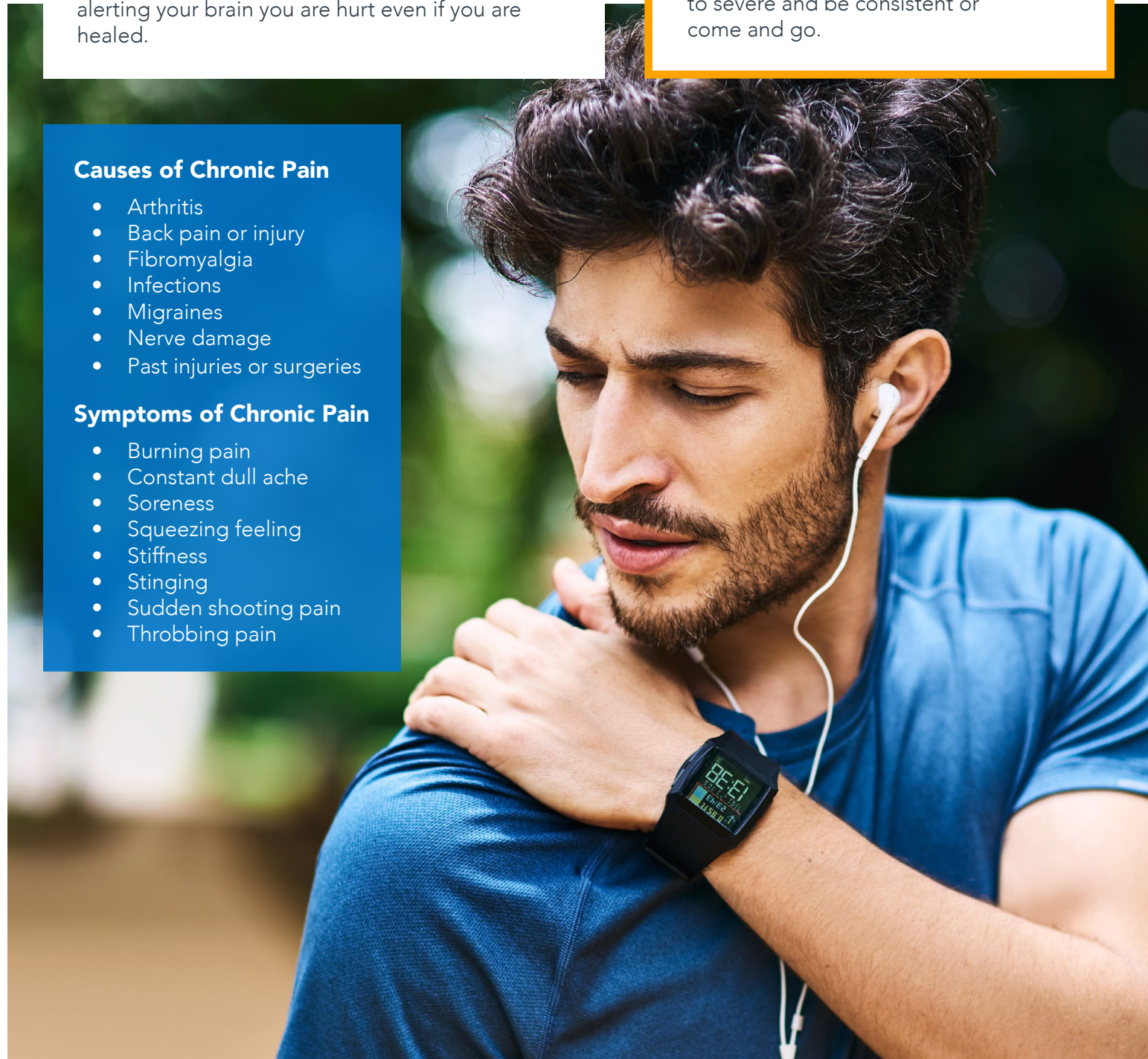
Chronic pain can begin without any obvious cause. However, it usually starts after an injury or a health condition. The pain level can range from mild to severe and be consistent or come and go.

### **Causes of Chronic Pain**

- Arthritis
- Back pain or injury
- Fibromyalgia
- Infections
- Migraines
- Nerve damage
- Past injuries or surgeries

### **Symptoms of Chronic Pain**

- Burning pain
- Constant dull ache
- Soreness
- Squeezing feeling
- Stiffness
- Stinging
- Sudden shooting pain
- Throbbing pain



## Living with Chronic Pain

Managing daily activities with chronic pain is not easy. Not only can chronic pain affect your physical wellbeing but your mental health as well. In fact, the psychological effects of chronic pain are just as problematic as the physical pain.

### 10 Tips for Dealing with Chronic Pain on Your Own

1. **Choose healthy food options:** It can be tempting to eat comfort and junk food, but following proper nutrition can make you feel better in the long run
2. **Exercise:** Regular exercise releases endorphins that naturally boost your mood and help you feel better about yourself
3. **Find something that helps you relax:** Read a book, meditate or try yoga
4. **Get proper rest:** Sleep is just as important as exercise and a proper diet
5. **Reduce stress triggers in your life:** Be more aware of what causes you to stress out; stress often increases pain
6. **Join a support group:** Meeting others living with chronic pain will help decrease your feeling of loneliness
7. **Cut back on drinking:** Drinking can mess up sleep patterns and increase pain
8. **Don't smoke:** Smoking can worsen pain and increase the risk of heart disease and cancer
9. **Get a massage:** Massages can reduce stress and relieve tension
10. **Find distractions:** Continue doing things you enjoy that will keep your mind off the pain

### Emotional Effects of Chronic Pain

- Irritability
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Inability to interact with others
- Inability to maintain relationships
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy

### Physical Effects of Chronic Pain

- Feeling tired or exhausted
- Loss of appetite
- Mood changes
- Trouble sleeping
- Weakness

“ Pain is a natural part of life and it's important to not let it control your daily activities. Patients who have developed healthy coping strategies in dealing with their chronic pain have better outcomes. It is important for patients to understand that treatment of pain involves an effort by your health care providers as well as active engagement in the treatment plan by the patients themselves. Patients need to find time to take care of themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. ”

- Dr. Nicholas Jasper, OrthoIndy physiatrist who specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation



## What is the best treatment for chronic pain?

There is not a simple answer to treating chronic pain. Pain is extremely complex and sources of pain can vary from person to person.

"Start by talking to a doctor about your chronic pain symptoms," said Dr. Jasper. "A physiatrist can help you identify the source of the pain and come up with a comprehensive treatment plan that takes into account your overall health and lifestyle goals."

## What is the best pain medication for chronic pain?

Over the counter pain medication:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Aspirin
- Ibuprofen (Advil)
- Naproxen (Aleve)

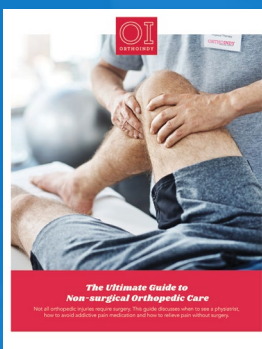
Some chronic pain can't be controlled with over the counter pain medication. In these cases, your doctor may want to prescribe something stronger. However, it's important to educate yourself about opioid use before accepting a prescription.

"Most often chronic pain can be treated successfully with non-addictive pain medication and a variety of other treatment methods," said Dr. Jasper. "Opioids are actually very unsuccessful in treating chronic pain in the long run. As a physiatrist, we want our patients to continue living their normal lifestyle without addictive pain medication."

## What is used to treat chronic pain?

- Over the counter and prescription medication
- Physical therapy
- Exercise
- Injections
- Acupuncture
- Relaxation techniques
- Psychological counseling

"Often the best treatment for chronic pain is a combination of methods," said Dr. Jasper. "Sometimes my patients will receive injections combined with physical therapy exercises and return to their normal daily activities with less or no pain at all. It is my job to help patients along the way with different treatment options and together we work to find solutions that empower the patient and improve their quality of life."



To help you better understand what physiatry is, why you might seek the care of a physiatrist and how a physiatrist treats orthopedic related conditions, read our *Ultimate Guide to Non-surgical Orthopedic Care*.





With years of experience and the most advanced technology, OrthoIndy physiatrists will give you the best chance possible to achieve your goals. **Make an appointment** and let OrthoIndy's team of experts help you get normal back, whatever your normal looks like.



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