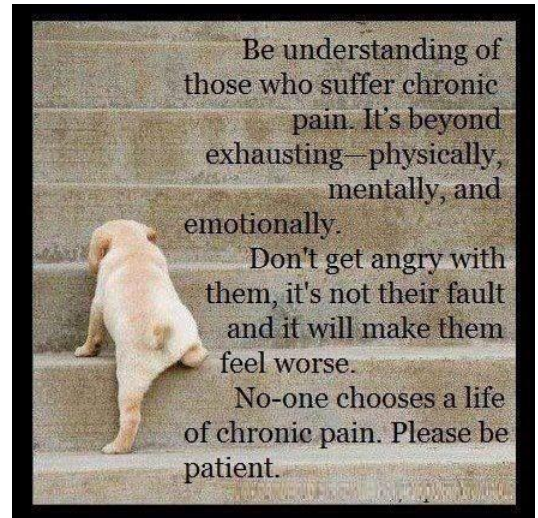


*“Hope is not lost. We are not crazy. We are not broke, nor weak, nor fragile, nor damaged goods.”.*

## What Is Chronic Pain?

Chronic pain is defined as pain that lasts longer than six months. Chronic pain can be mild or excruciating, episodic or continuous, merely inconvenient or totally incapacitating. With chronic pain, signals of pain remain active in the nervous system for months or even years. This can take both a physical and emotional toll on a person. The most common sources of pain stem from headaches, joint pain, pain from injury, and backaches. Other kinds of chronic pain include tendinitis, sinus pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and pain affecting specific parts of the body, such as the shoulders, pelvis, and neck. Generalized muscle or nerve pain can also develop into a chronic condition i.e. fibromyalgia, autonomic nervous system dysfunction. The emotional toll of chronic pain also can make pain worse. Anxiety, stress, depression, anger, and fatigue interact in complex ways with chronic pain and may decrease the body’s production of natural painkillers; moreover, such negative feelings may increase the level of substances that amplify sensations of pain, causing a vicious cycle. Pain is not a symptom that exists alone.

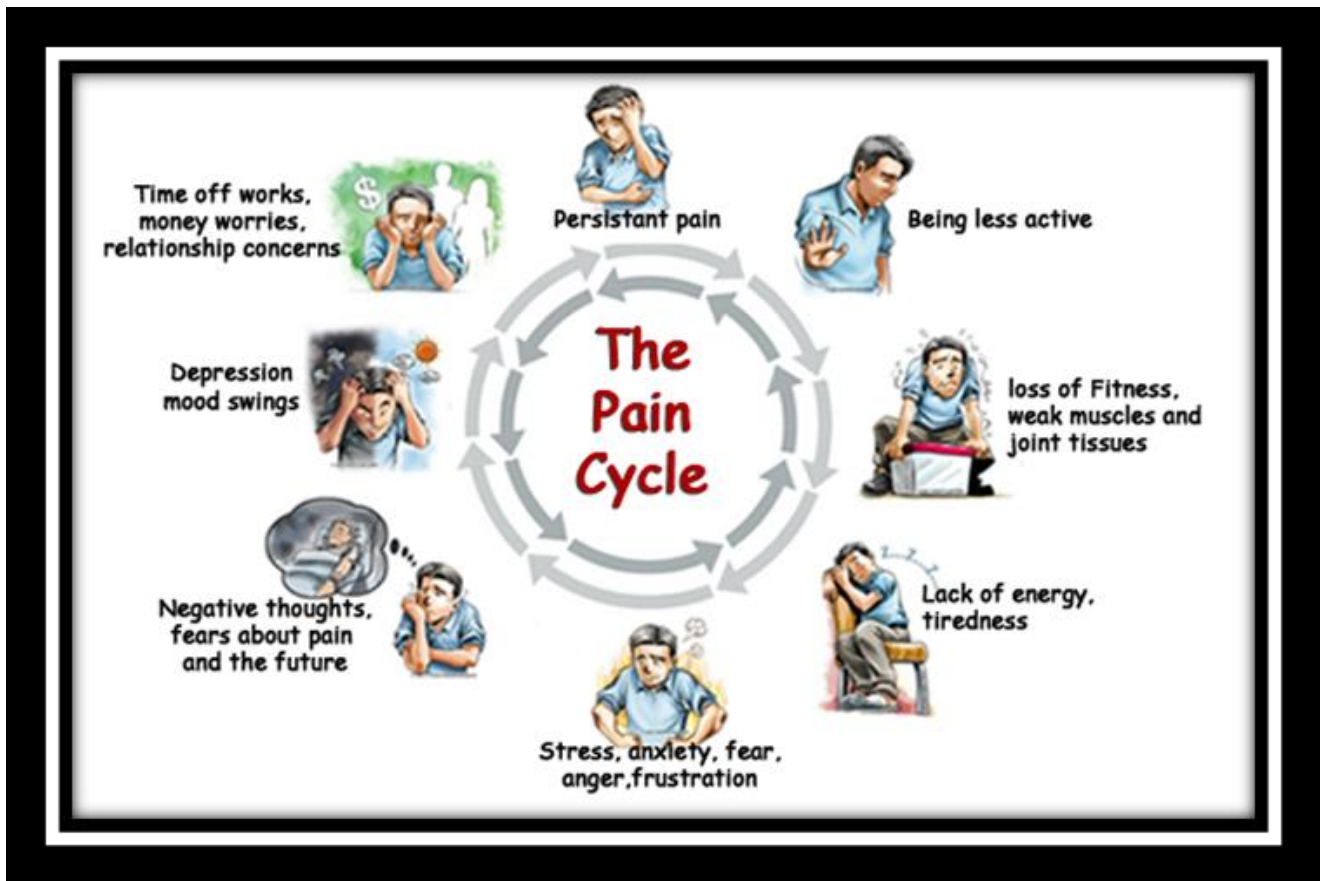


## Symptoms of Chronic Pain

- Mild to severe pain that does not go away
- Pain that may be described as shooting, burning, aching, or electrical
- Feeling of discomfort, soreness, tightness, or stiffness
- Other problems associated with pain can include:
  - Fatigue
  - Sleeplessness
  - Withdrawal from activity and
  - Increased need to rest
  - Weakened immune system
  - Changes in mood including hopelessness, fear, depression, irritability, anxiety
  - Disability

## Coping with Chronic Pain

The first step is to learn all you can about your condition. Understanding your pain is the first step to reducing it. Next, take an active role in your recovery. Talk with your doctor about medical treatments that might reduce your pain. But if these treatments can’t completely heal you, don’t give up hope. You can use basic lifestyle choices to control your pain and regain a normal life.



## Manage Stress and Your Emotions

Our bodies and minds are connected. Stress, tension and stirred emotions can aggravate pain. Find ways to reduce the stress in your life; deal with your troubling emotions and your pain likely will decrease. Deep breathing, visualization and other relaxation techniques can help you calm your mind and reduce your pain.

### *Get More Exercise*

Exercise leads to a healthier body, and a healthier body feels less pain. Strong, toned muscles feel less pain than unused muscles. Also, exercise will give you more of the energy you need to overcome the pain. Less tangible is the fact that when you're more fit, you'll feel better about yourself — more in control — and that can mean a lot. Be sure to talk to your doctor about exercise that is safe for you.

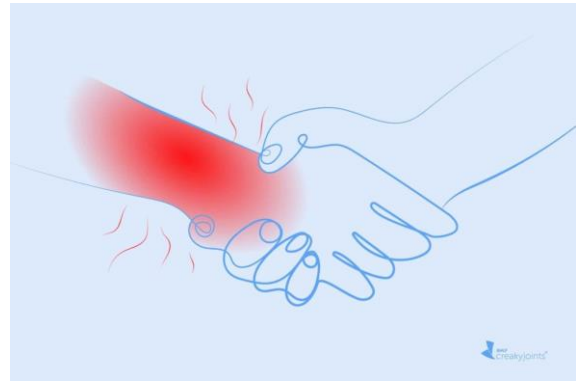
### *Control Your Physical Activity*

Specific activities or body movements may aggravate your pain more than others. Excluding those movements from your day can reduce your pain a great deal. If the painful movements involve important household, personal or work activities, consider using adaptive equipment that will let you perform the same activity without using the same painful motion.

### *Find Sources for Support*

Chronic Pain can make you feel isolated and afraid. You may feel like you're all alone. That couldn't be further from the truth. But it's estimated that one in three people suffer from chronic pain. Contact others who also suffer chronic pain to share what you know, and to learn from them. You'll learn ways to cope. You'll learn that the pain you feel, and the emotions that come with it, are not unusual.

Chronic pain support groups can be a great way to get this important human contact. Finally, look beyond the pain. Don't let your pain consume your life. There are more important things in your life to focus on, such as friends, family, work, and hobbies. Talk to your doctor about the ideas mentioned above, and start taking back control of your life. As you begin to refocus, the pain will decrease, and you will have improved quality of life.



**If you have any questions about this topic, please reach out to CompassionLink at [info@compassionlink.org](mailto:info@compassionlink.org). We will be happy to answer your questions.**

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#### **Sources:**

<http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/guide/understanding-pain-management-chronic-pain>

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