

## Definition of Chronic Pain?

The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) describes pain as an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage” (IASP, 1997).

Most pain resolves after healing has occurred. However, sometimes pain can continue after the painful stimulus is removed and the body has healed. Pain can also arise in the absence of detectable injury or damage. This is referred to as Chronic Pain.

Chronic Pain is a disease.

## Canadian Statistics on Pain

- One in five Canadian adults suffer from Chronic Pain.
- Pain is the most common reason for seeking health care.
- The prevalence of Chronic Pain increases with age.
- It is estimated that the annual cost of Chronic Pain is at least \$56-60 Billion dollars.



## Resources

- Centre for Pain and Disability Management Eastern Health Website (Under “Our services”)  
[www.easternhealth.ca](http://www.easternhealth.ca)
- Canadian Pain Coalition  
[www.canadianpaincoalition.ca](http://www.canadianpaincoalition.ca)
- Chronic Pain Association of Canada  
[www.chronicpaincanada.com](http://www.chronicpaincanada.com)
- Canadian Pain Society  
[www.canadianpainsociety.ca](http://www.canadianpainsociety.ca)
- American Chronic Pain Association  
[www.theacpa.org](http://www.theacpa.org)

## *Centre for Pain and Disability Management (CPDM)*

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# Understanding Chronic Pain



## What is Chronic Pain?

Chronic Pain is pain that continues beyond six months and affects overall quality of life. Unlike acute pain, which serves a protective role and can be cured, chronic pain is very complex. The science of pain is evolving, and we now know that the body's nervous system can become over sensitive with chronic pain. Chronic pain can lead to decreased muscle strength and endurance, interrupt sleep and eating patterns, and affect your mood. It can have a significant impact on all aspects of a person's life; therefore, it requires an integrated self-management approach, addressing both physical and psychosocial issues.

## What is Chronic Pain Self-Management?

Chronic pain self-management is about you taking control of your pain. By developing various skills you can become successful in setting realistic goals and achieving them in a pain managed fashion.

The primary goals of self-management are to:

- Reduce disability
- Improve function

## Some ways to help you self-manage your pain

- Learn more about chronic pain
- Prioritize what is important to you
- Delegate and break activities into manageable tasks
- Take scheduled lie down relaxation breaks throughout the day
- Use good posture and body mechanics when standing, sitting, and walking
- Pace activities according to your tolerances and stop before the pain increases
- Problem solve around activities of daily living
- Use medications appropriately



## Chronic Pain Myths

1. Chronic pain isn't real.  
**Fact:** Chronic pain is real; it is not imagined. It is the result of many different factors in the body/brain relationship.
2. The doctors can't find anything wrong, so it must be all in my head.  
**Fact:** Medical investigations often do not reveal objective findings related to chronic pain.
3. Rest is the best way to manage chronic pain.  
**Fact:** Inactivity can result in weakened muscles and increased pain. A structured activity plan, including power breaks, is recommended.
4. Pain medications are bad and will result in addiction.  
**Fact:** Pain medications can be helpful and used safely for long periods with appropriate monitoring; however, it is important to focus on self-management and utilize other strategies as well.
5. There is nothing I can do to manage my pain except lie down and take it.  
**Fact:** By learning effective pain management strategies, you can become more functional and improve your overall quality of life, despite pain.