

This leaflet contains information for people who have **persistent pain**. Based upon the information you have provided, your physiotherapist believes that the advice on this leaflet is appropriate for you. It aims to help you understand what persistent pain is and what may help. **Persistent pain** is pain that has lasted more than 3 months, which is the usual recovery period after an injury or illness. It can start following a specific problem, but sometimes it comes on for no reason. It can occur alongside another condition you are already living with.

Where is it felt?

Persistent pain can be felt in a specific area of the body, such as the back, legs or neck, but can also be felt throughout the body. People have different experiences of persistent pain – it can be occasional or continuous, may flare up easily, or seem to move around the body.

How could it affect me?

Living with persistent pain is a very common and often 'hidden' problem. It can affect lots of areas of your life and affects everyone differently. It can change your mood, work and home life, relationships, sleep and activity levels.

Why does it happen?

Pain is a warning system or 'alarm', activated by the nervous system. It is a 'protector' - the body's way of getting you to do something. After an injury, this alarm is helpful as it gives you time to heal. But sometimes alarms keep going off long after healing has occurred, and some go off for no reason. Persistent pain can often develop from the nervous system's 'alarm' becoming overly sensitive, like a car alarm that goes off when someone just brushes against a car.

Pain is not just about damage. The alarm system is influenced by a lot more than just your body tissues. Many factors in your life can play a part, such as how you think about pain, your emotions and your lifestyle.

Will it get better?

Many people have already had lots of tests, investigations and medical or surgical treatments, and know that long term pain does not always go away. One of the keys to living well despite pain is self-management. The good news is there are lots of ways you can make changes to help manage your pain, be more in control and improve your quality of life.

What can I do to help myself?

Small changes can make a big difference to your physical and mental health.

- Be active and take exercise. Choose an activity that you enjoy and that is easy to do. Walking, swimming, cycling, moving to music or exercise at home can all help with fitness.
The **NHS website** has some gentle and easy to follow exercises at www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/ and a range of exercise videos for people of all levels of fitness and ability at www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/
- Learn to relax, which can help with the stress of living with pain
- Plan your daily activities and pace yourself
- Make time for things you enjoy
- Develop coping strategies

Interested in learning more?

Understanding pain is important as it can change how much things hurt and how much your body can do.

www.tamethebeast.org/ is a short, animated video explaining pain.

www.retrainpain.org/ is a series of 1 minute videos covering various topics.

www.my.livewellwithpain.co.uk/ is a website for people who are living with pain. It contains useful information, resources, and printable booklets. The '10 Footsteps' help you learn skills to get you back on track to living well, despite pain.

What can be done to help me?

On the '**Melo Cymru**' website, you will find:

- Several courses, including a free 6 week Stress Control course that will teach you to manage your stress in 6 easy steps
- Resources to help you look after your mental wellbeing. These include Apps, Audio & Video and Books & Leaflets

www.melo.cymru - Mental Wellbeing Resources, Courses + Advice Gwent Wales.

EPP Cymru (Education Programmes for Patients) run a range of health and wellbeing self-management courses via Zoom, including Living with Chronic Pain, which you can book onto yourself. www.gavo.org.uk/epp

Pain Medicines – talk to your GP or pharmacist.

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg