

Talking to Your Doctor About Chronic Pain Management



When you have severe, acute pain, from a fall or accident at work for example, your doctor may prescribe an opioid medication for short-term treatment until the injury resolves. Chronic pain, on the other hand, usually requires a different approach.

Chronic pain generally persists for several months and is not easily resolved. Chronic pain can result from a condition or an injury but continues long after the injury has healed. It may also be related to other issues, such as long-term back or joint pain from physically demanding jobs like those in the home building industry.

There are many different treatment approaches for chronic pain. Some of them work best for specific types of pain. However, in many cases arriving at the best treatment approach is a shared decision patients make with their doctor and other health care providers. The goals of treatment for chronic pain are focused on managing pain levels and improving functioning so the pain does not interfere with normal activities.

Every treatment has benefits and risks to consider when deciding what might work best for you. Often people arrive at a combination of pain management approaches through trial and error and with the help of more than one practitioner.

The following suggestions can help you prepare to get the most out a visit with your health care provider to address your chronic pain.

Questions doctors may ask you about your pain

- When did the pain start?
- Are there definite circumstances that make it worse or better?
- What types of activities has it affected?
- What important activities have you had to discontinue or limit?
- What have you tried and what (if anything) has worked?
- Are there any treatments you don't want to consider? For example, if you've had a negative experience with opioids, issues with substance use, or simply prefer not to take them.

✓ For more information, check out: [You Can Manage Your Chronic Pain To Live a Good Life: A Guide for People in Recovery](#) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

These materials are intended for educational purposes only. The information provided is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease or condition, nor is it intended to substitute for clinical or medical care. Decisions about treatment of medical and behavioral health conditions and the use of medications are the sole responsibility of the patient, treatment providers, treating physician and other qualified healthcare professionals. Not all treatment options presented are appropriate for all patients or conditions. Talk with your physician about what course of treatment is best for you.

Make a list of questions to ask your doctor

- What are my options to treat my chronic pain?
- What medications may help and what are the risks and benefits of each?
- How long, how often, and how much would I need to take?
- Do I need to take them with food or at specific times?
- Do they interact with any foods, other medicines, or alcohol?
- Are there activities that might be unsafe while I am taking the medication?
- What are the possible side effects and what should I do if I get them?
- What other forms of treatment, besides medication, that may help with my chronic pain?

✓ For more information, check out: [Discussing Prescription Opioid Painkillers with your Doctor](#) from the National Safety Council

Make sure to ask these questions before you are prescribed an opioid medication

- Are there non-opioid medications that might work in my case?
- How long do you anticipate I'll be on the medication?
- How can I safely start and stop opioid pain medication?
- How can I reduce the risks associated with pain medications?
- What if I have a personal or family history of addiction to alcohol or other drugs?
- What activities might be unsafe while I am taking the medication?
- What interactions could this medication have with alcohol or other drugs?

✓ For more information, check out:

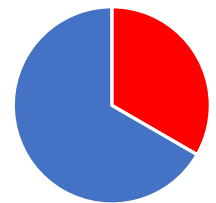
- [Drug Interaction Checker](#) from Drug.com
- [Checklist What to Ask Your Doctor Before Taking Opioids](#) from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA)

For more resources on opioids and the home building industry, visit nahb.org/opioids.

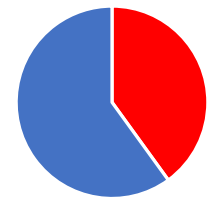
Problem opioid use can be treated. The sooner people ask for help, the better. To locate help in your community for yourself, a co-worker, or a loved one, visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) website at www.samhsa.gov or call SAMHSA's free, confidential, 24/7 National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).



Up to 70% of workers in the construction industry report some type of musculoskeletal pain (pain affecting the muscles, bones, ligaments, and tendons).



More than 1/3 of construction workers report back pain in the past three months. This is higher than any other industry.



Almost 40% of construction workers over age 50 have chronic back pain.

Sources:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22762489>;

<https://bit.ly/2VYWms1>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24760608>