

Pain self-management

Information and advice for patients

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What is pain self-management?

Pain self-management is about helping to improve your quality of life, and helping you live with your pain. It can help increase your independence. The focus is on helping people do the things that are important to them, despite the pain. Pain self-management is not likely to change the pain or take it away.

Pain self-management can involve a 10 week group programme, or some one-to-one work.

What does the group programme involve?

The group programme consists of ten weekly sessions, each lasting two and a half hours. During the sessions you will be given lots of information about pain and how to cope with it. You will be given advice about how to use this information in your day to day life. We will support you as you start to make some changes. There are various members of the team leading the sessions including nurses, physiotherapists and psychologists. There is a coffee break during each session.

We cover topics such as:

- Why acute and chronic pain are different and why they need managing differently.
- Relaxation techniques / stress management.
- Pacing.
- Approaches to activity – including any fears about activity and enabling you to feel confident to resume some hobbies you previously enjoyed.
- Managing flare ups and setbacks.
- Medicines and their use in chronic pain.

We ask you to come with an open mind and be willing to try things out. We also ask you to arrive on time and to commit to attending every session.

What does the one-to-one work involve?

If the group sessions are not suitable for you, you may be offered some one-to-one appointments. These could be attended face-to-face or on the telephone. You may meet with a psychologist, physiotherapist or nurse. All these are specialists in working with people with long term pain. We work closely as a team. Sometimes you will see more than one of us, or see us jointly.

In your appointments, we help you work towards your goals. These could be about improving functioning, quality of life or independence. The number of appointments varies, the average is around four appointments.

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Why is there a psychologist involved in these treatments?

Sometimes people are concerned that there is a psychologist working in the pain team. Sometimes people wonder if we might think the pain is 'all in your mind'. We know that this is not the case. We know the pain is very real. At the same time, addressing difficult thoughts and feelings linked to the pain can be of great benefit. We can help you to understand and cope with common emotions people experience in response to their pain. These include frustration, stress, anxiety, panic and low mood. We discuss how pain can affect relationships too, as well as other challenges of living with pain. The overall aim is the same for all of the team - to reduce the level of distress you may feel and help you live well with the pain.

Is pain self-management for me?

Pain self-management is not for everyone. If you want to do this work and feel ready to do this work – yes, pain self-management is for you.

Sometimes pain self-management is not the right way forward, or it is not the right time to do the work. For example, you may want to delay this work until you have followed through some pain related investigations or other treatments such as injections. You may want to focus on pain reduction, rather than pain self-management. You may want to delay this work until you have addressed other priorities such as housing problems, drug or alcohol problems or mental health difficulties.

I want to give pain self-management a try – what happens next?

If you want to try pain self-management, please call us within four weeks of receiving this leaflet. This is so we can add your name to a waiting list. You will be offered an appointment with one of the team to discuss your pain and the group or one to one treatment options. You will make a plan from there.

If you want to go ahead with pain self-management or if you have any questions about it, please contact the pain service:

Telephone: 0121 507 4866 or 5603 or 4344 (Please leave a message if we are busy)

Email: swbh.pain-plan@nhs.net

If we do not hear from you within four weeks, we will assume that you have decided that pain self-management is not the right approach for you, or it is not the right time.

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How can I give feedback?

Your feedback is important. It helps to improve our service. We will ask for feedback on a regular basis and at the end of your involvement with the service.

Sources used in this leaflet

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2021). Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain: guidance (NG193). Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng193> (Accessed 21 February 2022).

Faculty of Pain Medicine of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. (2021). Core standards for Pain Management Services in the UK. Available at: https://fpm.ac.uk/sites/fpm/files/documents/2021-07/FPM-Core-Standards-2021_1.pdf (Accessed 21 February 2022).

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