

Chronic pain and persistent physical concerns: GP information sheet

Living with pain or ongoing physical concerns can touch many parts of life, from sleep and work to mood and relationships. Pain is very real, and the mind and body are closely connected. Support is available.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

In the body

- Pain might come and go, or linger
- Tiredness could build over time
- Some days may feel harder than others

Everyday activity

- People might do less of what they enjoy
- Some may push hard, then need to rest
- Plans could feel uncertain

Mood and stress

- People might feel worn down or low
- Worry about the future may grow
- Stress could show up as physical discomfort

At work or study

- Sitting or standing for long could feel hard
- Concentration may drift
- People might worry about keeping up

Sleep

- Getting comfortable might take a while
- Nights could feel broken
- Mornings may feel slow

In relationships

- Loved ones may want to help
- Roles at home could shift
- People might feel misunderstood

What the person might be bringing

People may have lived with pain or physical concerns for some time, and might feel tired of explaining it. Some people, including many men, may first bring stress or worry as a physical complaint, such as aches, tension or tiredness.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel easier to talk. Feeling believed and heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs **already do well**

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person someone talks to about pain. A calm, gentle opening can help people share how it touches their everyday life.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

GPs can offer a calm, familiar presence as people explore their options, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can be very reassuring.

What psychology **may offer**

Understanding

- Time to make sense of the pain experience
- Learning how stress, mood and the body connect
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- A safe space to talk

Practical support

- Ideas for pacing activity
- Approaches for living well alongside pain
- Gentle ways to ease stress and tension
- Working alongside the GP and other professionals

Everyday things **some people find helpful**

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Pacing activity across the day
- Gentle movement that feels manageable
- Relaxation or slow breathing
- Staying connected with others
- Making time for enjoyable things
- Being patient with themselves

Trusted **Australian resources**

Chronic Pain Australia chronicpainaustralia.org.au | PainLink 1300 340 357

PainAustralia painaustralia.org.au

Medicare Mental Health 1800 595 212

Referring to **Strategic Psychology**

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.