

ABOUT THE AMERICAN PAIN FOUNDATION:

The American Pain Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization serving people with pain through information, advocacy, and support. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for people with pain by raising public awareness, providing practical information, promoting research on pain, and advocating to remove barriers and increase access to effective pain management.

For more information, visit our website:

www.painfoundation.org. There you will find information about the causes of pain, different treatment options, ways to find trained specialists, peer support, and how to cope with pain. Our website also provides links to over 200 carefully selected websites on pain and related topics.

If you are unable to access the Internet and need more information, please write to us at

American Pain Foundation
201 N. Charles St., Suite 710
Baltimore, MD 21201-4111

To order this guide or for more information,
leave a message on our toll-free line at
1-888-615-PAIN(7246)

Or send an e-mail to
info@painfoundation.org



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FINDING HELP FOR YOUR PAIN



A PAIN RESOURCE Guide

AMERICAN PAIN FOUNDATION



FIND THE PAIN CARE YOU NEED

If you are a person with serious chronic pain there's a good chance you've been going from one healthcare provider to another looking for relief. There's also a good chance you've heard the words “Nothing more can be done to ease your pain” or “You'll just have to live with it.”

This resource guide is designed to encourage you to take charge of your pain and to help you find a healthcare provider who has the know-how, skills, and willingness to work with you to manage it.

Know the facts: more than 50 million Americans—men, women, and children—live with serious chronic pain that interferes with their personal, social, and work lives. Although we now have the medical knowledge to manage most pain, most goes untreated, is undertreated, or is improperly treated.

Why is finding a healthcare provider who is knowledgeable and skilled in pain management so difficult? Because understanding that chronic pain is a disease in itself—and one that is harmful to the body—is a new way of thinking. Until recently, pain was considered only as a symptom of a disease or condition, or just a natural part of aging. So most healthcare providers have been trained in treating diseases—not pain.

Today, we know that pain should never be ignored. It should be assessed thoroughly and treated aggressively, and in some cases managed as a chronic condition. We've learned that when pain is managed, stress is reduced, and the body heals faster. We also know that when people with pain take an active role in their pain management, they get the best results possible: less pain and more involvement in life.

Good Pain Management Begins with You!

Your goal is to manage your pain and not let it manage you.

- **Get a correct diagnosis.** Your pain may or may not be signaling a disease or infection in your body.
- **Be in charge. Speak up! Be your own best advocate.** Understand that your pain needs to be assessed and treated because it can be very harmful to your body. Tell your healthcare provider you are in pain. Don't let anyone tell you your pain is "just in your head."
- **Realize that you are the expert on your pain.** Neither your healthcare provider nor anyone else can know how much you are hurting, where you are hurting, and how pain is interfering with your life.
- **Make a personal commitment to reducing your pain.** Be persistent. Start with determination and a positive outlook. Participate actively in your pain care all along the way—from finding a healthcare provider to developing and sticking with a pain management plan.
- **Do your homework!** Become informed and learn all you can about your health problem, your pain, pain management options, and the types of healthcare providers who specialize in pain. Use the tools and resources you would use to learn about anything else. Start by using the American Pain Foundation's (APF) publications and website (www.painfoundation.org). You can also visit your local library, search the Internet, and talk to people you know who are living

with pain. Reference librarians will often do Internet searches for you if you do not have a computer.

- **Learn to describe your pain symptoms clearly:** how much it hurts, where it hurts, how often it hurts, and what it feels like so you can contribute to the assessment of your pain. APF's pain assessment guide will help: www.painfoundation.org/page.asp?menu=1&item=3&file=documents/doc_036.htm
- **Ask your healthcare provider if he or she is comfortable helping you manage your pain, and working as your partner in developing a pain management plan.** Make sure your healthcare provider:
 - Knows about chronic pain and how to treat it.
 - Believes your report of pain.
 - Listens carefully to your concerns.
 - Asks you questions and performs diagnostic tests to identify the problem.
 - Encourages you to ask questions.
 - Is comfortable when you disagree.
 - Is willing to speak to your family or friends if you are not feeling well.
 - Works with you to develop a pain management plan, including risks and benefits of each treatment.
 - Tells you when he or she does not know something about your pain problem or treatment.

LEARN ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are many ways to treat pain. Find out about the benefits and risks of drug and non-drug therapies. Learn about the different ways drugs can be taken. For example, opioids—strong medications for relieving serious pain—can be delivered through pills, a transdermal patch, or a pump. Many non-drug therapies, used alone or in combination with medications, can also help reduce pain. A few include psychological counseling and physical therapy, as well as a host of complementary and alternative treatments such as massage, acupuncture, and yoga.

WHEN SHOULD I SEE A PAIN CARE SPECIALIST?

Your family healthcare professional is trained to know about a wide range of diseases, but may not have had much training in treating pain. If your current treatment is not working or if your pain is getting worse, it's probably time to see a pain specialist.

FIND A PAIN SPECIALIST:

START ASKING, START CALLING

Start by asking your provider to refer you to a specialist with expertise in treating your particular problem. A good question to ask is, "Who would you go to if you were in pain?" If he or she cannot suggest a specialist, the next step would be to check with your health insurance provider to see if there are pain specialists or pain clinics in your plan. You can also look for pain specialists by:

- Asking friends, family members, co-workers—particularly those who've had pain or know someone with pain—for suggestions.
- Speaking with people who belong to pain support groups in your area or region. Ask what doctors they like and why. Ask them what they look for in a specialist or pain center. Check with the American Chronic Pain Association: ACPA@pacbell.net, www.theacpa.org, or 800-533-3231.
- Contacting the referral service of the largest hospital in your area.
- Calling state and county medical societies.
- Contacting your local chapter of the American Society of Pain Management Nurses (ASPMN), the American Pain Society (APS), and the American Academy of Pain Medicine (AAPM).
- Calling your local hospice. They can be helpful in finding a pain specialist even for non-end-of-life pain care. Also, someone in your State Cancer Pain Initiative may be able to suggest specialists even if your pain is caused by something other than cancer.

NO PAIN SPECIALISTS IN YOUR AREA?

- Call or write your chamber of commerce and/or contact the board of directors (chairman or members) of your local hospital. Ask about a larger hospital offering outreach clinics or visiting physicians.
- Contact your local legislators about the lack of resources and request their assistance.

LIMITED OR NO HEALTH INSURANCE?

- Contact your local hospital's social services department or your local health department.
- Contact Chronic Care Solutions, a nurse-run site focused on long-term care assistance: 2801 N. Glebe Road, Arlington, VA 22207, www.chroniccaresolutions.com.
- Contact The Center for Patient Advocacy: 800-846-7444, www.patientadvocacy.org.
- Contact the Patient Advocate Foundation: 800-532-5274.

MAKE A LIST

Write down the names of the providers you think might be right for you. Leave room next to each doctor's name for notes and appointment times.

CALL THE PAIN SPECIALISTS' OFFICES

Before contacting the doctor, talk with the office manager or a nurse at the practice. Begin by saying that you are looking for a doctor who can treat your pain. Describe your pain briefly. They will know about the types of cases the doctor handles.

Some questions to ask:

- Does the doctor treat my type of pain?
- Is he or she accepting new patients?
- How long will I have to wait to get an appointment?
- Will you accept my insurance?

- Is there a charge for an initial interview with the doctor?
- Are nurses involved in the practice and are they available to talk with me?
- Who will see me in case of an emergency?

INTERVIEW THE DOCTORS

As a self-advocate, it's up to you or someone helping you to interview the doctors on your list and determine who best suits your needs—that includes selecting someone who not only has the skills to treat you, but someone who makes you feel comfortable as well. Before going into the interview have all your questions written down. The interview will probably be no longer than 20 minutes. Get to the office early so that you can observe how the office works and how patients are treated. Do staff members and patients appear to be comfortable? Also, check the surroundings. Is the office clean? Is there adequate privacy?

Begin your interview by telling the doctor about your symptoms and all the medications you're taking. Describe other treatments for pain you've had. This interview will give you insight into the doctor's willingness and ability to communicate with you.

Some questions to ask the doctor:

- Have you treated others with my type of pain?
- What types of treatments do you use to treat my type of pain (medications and other therapies)?

- How would you describe good pain management?
- What is your success rate in treating my type of pain?
- How much relief should I expect from treatments?
- What do you think of complementary and alternative approaches (such as acupuncture, massage, hypnosis, herbal remedies)?

Other questions to ask:

- Are you a member of a pain specialty organization?
- What was the most recent pain conference or seminar you've attended?
- Do you do any teaching?
- Do you participate actively in improving pain management on a local, regional, or national level? If so, how?

CHECK THE DOCTORS' CREDENTIALS

Once you've selected one or more doctors, check them out by contacting your state or county medical society, the American Board of Medical Specialties (www.abms.org), and the Specialty Licensing Board (www.abms.org/member.asp). You can also ask the doctor's office to supply his or her credentials concerning schooling and special training.

SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT AND GET PREPARED

Once you've scheduled your appointment, gather your previous medical records and deliver these by hand to the doctor's office before the visit to make sure they are there for the doctor to review.

When you go in for your visit:

- Give the doctor a written description of your medical history, including all treatments for pain.
- Give the doctor a list of all medications you are taking including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and herbal supplements. Report any allergies.
- Discuss with your doctor what you expect from your treatment.
- Describe your goals. Ask the doctor to work with you to develop a pain management plan.
- Ask the doctor for a complete assessment of your pain.
- After the first visit, determine how satisfied you were with the visit. Did the doctor take enough time to answer all of your questions? Did he or she take time to ask you questions?
- If you were not satisfied with this visit for any reason, interview other doctors until you've found the right one.

RESOURCES

FIND A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

- American Academy of Family Physicians
www.familydoctor.org
- American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
www.aanp.org 202-966-6414
- American Academy of Physician Assistants
www.aapa.org 703-836-2272
- American Board of Medical Specialties
www.abms.org 847-491-9091
- American Medical Association
www.ama-assn.org 312-464-5000
- Cancer Care
www.cancercare.org 800-813-4673
- Center for Patient Advocacy
www.patientadvocacy.org 703-748-0400
- Doctor Directory
www.doctordirectory.com 828-255-0012
- Federation of State Medical Boards (disciplinary history of physicians)
www.docinfo.org
- Federation of State Medical Boards (verify physician credentials)
www.fsmb.org 817-571-2949
- National Conference of Gerontological Nurse Practitioners
www.ncgnp.org 703-802-0088
- Nurse Practitioner Central
www.nurse.net/np 202-659-2190
- Yellow Pages
www.yellowpages.com

FIND A PAIN SPECIALIST OR CENTER

- American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives (find listings of state initiatives)
www.aacpi.org 608-265-4013
- American Academy of Pain Medicine
www.painmed.org 847-375-4731
- American Academy of Pain Management
www.aapainmanage.org 209-533-9744
- American Board of Pain Medicine
www.abpm.org 847-375-4726
- American Chronic Pain Association
www.theacpa.org 800-533-3231
- American Pain Society
www.ampainsoc.org 847-375-4715
- Cancer Care
www.cancercare.org 800-813-4673
- Case Management Resource Guide
www.cmrg.com 800-784-2332
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
www.carf.org 520-325-1044
- Mayo Clinic Pain Management Center
www.mayoclinic.com/findinformation/conditioncenters
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
www.nhpco.org 703-837-1500
- Pain.com
www.pain.com/painclinics/default.cfm

GET BACK TO LIFE!

HAVE A CLEAR AND REALISTIC EXPECTATION of Relief

- Know that chronic pain tends not to disappear.
- Accept that you may always live with some degree of pain.
- Decide that you will do all you can to reduce your pain to a tolerable level.
- Commit to living life again.

NOTES

YOUR SUPPORT is NEEDED!

The American Pain Foundation, an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, depends on unrestricted contributions and grants from individuals, foundations, and corporations. We would appreciate your support. Please send your tax-deductible donation to: **American Pain Foundation, 201 N. Charles St., Suite 710, Baltimore, MD 21201-4111.**

Join Us

Help us build the pain movement and support for those with pain. It's free! Sign up to receive our newsletter, updates, legislative alerts, "information you can use," and more. Just complete and return this form.

Name

Address

City

State Zip

Telephone Fax

E-mail

☐ I am a Person with Pain

☐ Friend or Family Member

☐ Healthcare Professional

☐ Patient Advocate

☐ Member of the Media

☐ Corporate Representative

☐ Other

☐ I am interested in becoming a volunteer

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Email: info@painfoundation.org