Center for Integrated Healthcare

VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Understanding Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is best understood as an interaction of numerous factors. Many aspects of these factors can be addressed to help manage chronic pain conditions.

Factor	What you can do to improve pain management
Physical	• Keep muscles toned through physical activity. • Take prescribed pain medication. • Use relaxation techniques to relax muscles and control the stress response.
Emotional	• Use relaxation to control anxiety. • Stay involved with relationships and enjoyable activities to protect against depression and other negative moods.
Cognitive	• Recognize unhealthy thinking patterns that interfere with adaptive coping with pain. • Challenge faulty thinking and replace it with healthy thoughts.
Behavior	• Stay physically active. • Pace your activities; avoid a cycle of overactivity and underactivity. • Adhere to medical recommendations (including medications and physical therapy).
Social	• Discuss what you find helpful and not helpful with family and others who are close to you. • Stay socially involved.

Reference

Hunter, C. L., Goodie, J. L., Oordt, M. S., & Dobmeyer, A. C. (2009). *Integrated Behavioral Health in Primary Care: Step-by-step Guidance for Assessment and Intervention*, American Psychological Association.