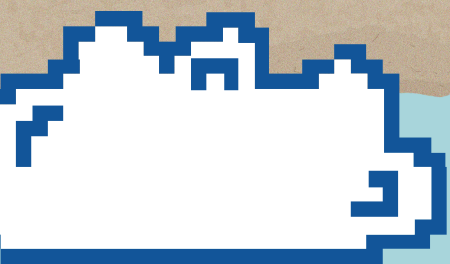


LIVING WELL WITH CHRONIC PAIN

for kids



FINDING YOUR PATH FOR HANDLING PAIN



LIVING WELL WITH CHRONIC PAIN *(for kids)*

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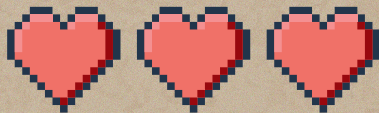


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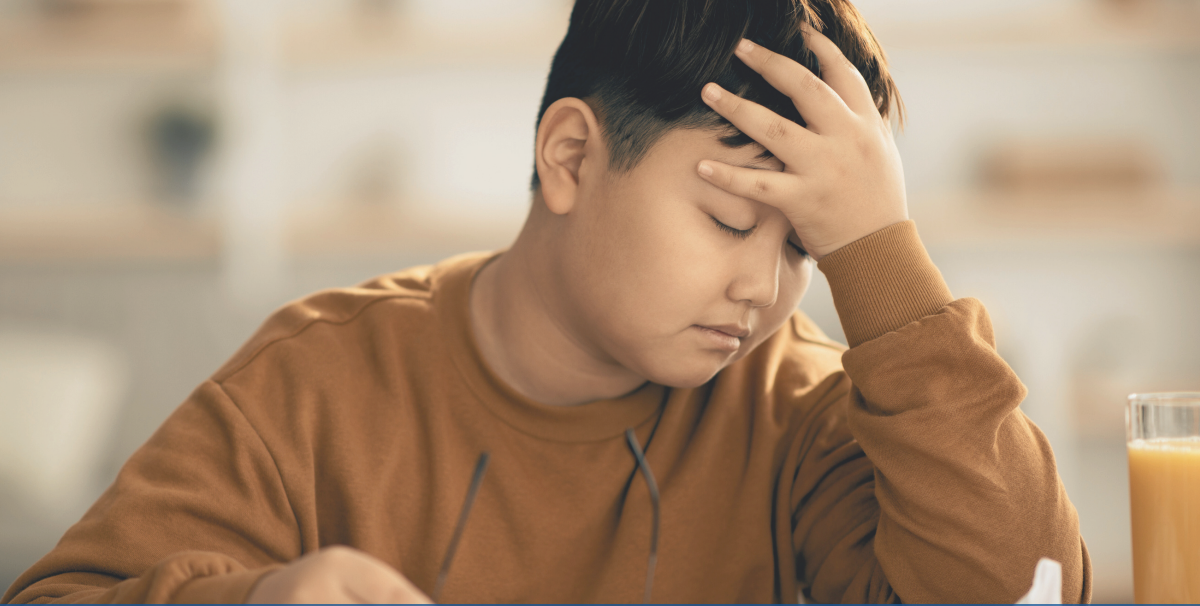
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The information provided in this booklet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be used as professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The U.S. Pain Foundation does not endorse any specific treatment or approach to treatment. For specific questions or concerns, consult your doctor. References, citations, and sources found in this booklet can be located at uspainfoundation.org/pain/lwwcp



What is Chronic Pain?

Pain is how your body tells you that something is wrong. Sometimes, even when a doctor tries to help figure out your pain and make it go away, the pain stays for a long time. That is called **chronic pain**.

Chronic pain can make it hard to do everyday things like playing or going to school. It can also make you feel sad or frustrated. That's why it's so important to take care of your whole self, including your mind and body.

With patience and help from the people who care about you, you can still do fun things and have a great life. Don't forget, each tiny step forward counts!



YOU CAN
DO IT!



Figuring Out Your Pain

Lots of things can make you more likely to have pain that lasts a long time. Some are because of your genes or how your body works, while others come from the world around you.

Sometimes when our bodies hurt or feel funny, it can be tricky for doctors to figure out why. So the doctors may ask you many questions about where you feel pain, how bad it is, and what it feels like. They might also do some tests with big names to try to understand why you're hurting:

- **Bloodwork:** A check-up for your blood to see if everything is okay inside.
- **Imaging:** Using special machines, like X-rays or MRIs, to take pictures inside your body and see if anything looks different.
- **Diagnostic injections:** A shot that can help figure out where the pain is coming from.
- **Electromyography:** Checking how your muscles are working.
- **Nerve conduction testing:** Showing how well your nerves are sending messages to your brain.
- **Neurological assessments:** You do different tasks to see how your brain talks to your body.
- **Mobility and strength assessments:** Showing your doctor how strong and flexible you are.
- **Genetic testing:** Checking if there's anything special about your genes that could be causing the pain.

It's really important to be honest with the doctors and tell them exactly how you're feeling. This helps them figure out the best way to deal with your pain.



Learning About Managing Your Pain

Pain feels different for each person. Just like one way of doing homework might work better for you than your friend, treatments for pain can also work differently for each person. Even if one thing doesn't work, there are lots of other options that could help you feel better. It's important to find a doctor who knows a lot about how to help with pain.

Remember that just one type of treatment might not be enough to make your pain feel better. Using different treatments together works best! That might mean you see multiple people on your care team, like a pain doctor, a physical therapist, and a pain psychologist, just to name a few. This is called **multidisciplinary care**. You want to have the best pain team working with you to help you get better and back to feeling more like your usual self.



The U.S. Pain Foundation has a Pediatric Pain Warrior Program just for you and your family! This cool program offers a family summer camp, retreats, workshops, and more. To learn more, visit: uspainfoundation.org/pediatricpainwarriors.



When you go to see a doctor, write down any questions you have with the help of a parent or guardian, and what you hope to be able to do. You may want to ask about any sleep changes, new or worse pain, or wanting to be able to do a certain activity. Your thoughts and opinions matter!

When you use different treatments together, like medicine, exercises, learning special skills to help you deal with your pain, and shots (if needed!), it can help your pain a lot more. And don't forget—scientists are always working on finding new treatments.

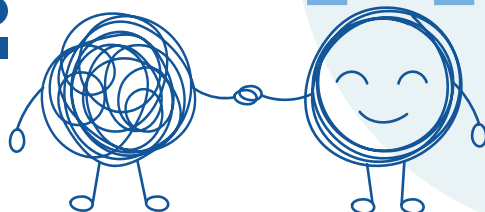
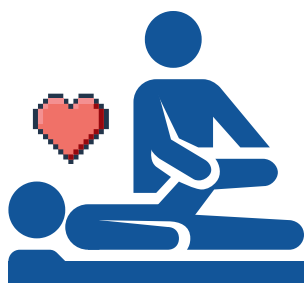




Different Kinds of Treatments

Some of the types of treatments you can try are:

- **Self-management:** Simple things to try at home, like using ice packs or heating pads.
- **Restorative therapies:** Treatments to improve how your body behaves, like physical therapy.
- **Complementary and integrative health options:** Other treatments that work alongside your doctor's plan, like yoga or acupuncture.
- **Mind-body and behavioral health approaches:** Helping your brain and body work together, like seeing a therapist to learn special tricks to handle your pain.
- **Medications:** Pills, lotions, or shots to help with your pain.
- **External medical devices:** Gadgets that work to lower your pain, like a TENS unit.
- **Interventional procedures:** Sometimes, you might need different kinds of shots, or bigger procedures like surgery.



A doctor or nurse can help you find the best things to try. It's a good idea to start with things like physical therapy or talking to a pain psychologist or therapist before trying anything like medication or surgery.

If you're having a hard time finding something that helps, you might be able to join a special test of new medicines, treatments, or devices called a **clinical trial**. But make sure you talk about it with your doctor and parents or guardians, and understand exactly how it works.





Taking Charge of Your Pain

Did you know that besides doctors helping you with pain, there are things you can do by yourself to feel better? These are called self-management and pacing strategies.

CHANGING UP ACTIVITIES

Take it Easy and Know Your Limits: You might need to take breaks, switch between sitting and standing, or find different ways to do stuff.

Think Outside the Box: There are cool gadgets and tools out there, like braces, canes, chairs, special keyboards, or even programs that let you use your voice instead of typing.

Ask for Help: If you're having trouble, occupational therapists and other adults can help. Your parents or guardians and doctors can also talk to your teachers about making a special plan for your pain to help make things easier for you at school. These plans are called 504s or IEPs (individualized education programs). This may include things like getting more time when taking tests.



FINDING WAYS TO MOVE

Sometimes when we have pain, it can be hard to make ourselves move around. But it's important to do some exercise or movement, even if it's just a little bit.

You can try fun stuff like yoga, tai chi (kind of like slo-mo karate), swimming, going for walks, or even riding a cool bike that leans back. Just make sure to talk to a doctor first to make sure it's okay for you, and you can always take a break!

SLEEPING BETTER

When you have chronic pain, it can be hard to sleep well. And then, not getting enough sleep can make the pain feel worse.

Try getting your body used to a schedule by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on the weekends. Relax before bed by reading, focusing on breathing, or listening to calming music. Make sure your bedroom is comfy and quiet. Try not to use screens like TVs, phones, or tablets for at least 30 minutes before going to sleep—and definitely not in bed! Eating sweets or drinking pop or soda at night can also make it harder to sleep.

If you still have trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor. There are special doctors who can help with sleep.





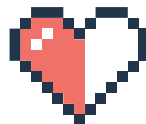
TACKLING STRESS

When we feel pain, it can make us feel stressed. And when we feel stressed, it can make the pain worse. Trying to lower our stress can help us feel better, even if it doesn't totally get rid of our pain.

Tips for feeling less stress:

- Sit quietly and think about things that make you feel good
- Try breathing exercises
- Pet an animal
- Listen to music, draw pictures, or dance around
- Write about your feelings
- Move your body
- Rest when you need to, and pace yourself
- Say “no” if you feel too tired or sick to do something
- Try to focus on the things you can do, not the things you can't
- Try not to feel embarrassed about having pain

If you're feeling upset because of pain, or need help learning how to pace yourself or do things differently, talking to a friendly counselor or therapist can help.





CHOWING DOWN

Eating whole or natural foods can help your body. Try to eat lots of fruits and vegetables, plus foods like fish, nuts, and avocados. And try to eat less stuff that is sugary.

If you ever need some extra help figuring out foods that are good for your body, you can talk to an expert called a licensed dietitian.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Don't let pain get in the way of having fun with your loved ones. Tell them what's going on and what you need help with. You can still do cool stuff together, like playing games or making crafts.

Ask a trusted adult to help you find places online to make friends with other kids who like the same things you do, like music or playing games, or a group for people dealing with the same stuff you are!



The U.S. Pain Foundation has a Pediatric Pain Warrior Program that helps you connect with other kids and families living with chronic pain through peer support groups, in-person events, and more. Find info at: uspainfoundation.org/pediatricpainwarriors.



Don't Ignore Your Feelings

Does your pain ever make you feel really grumpy? That's totally normal! When we're in pain, we can forget that taking care of our feelings is just as important as taking care of our bodies.

Talking to someone like a therapist or psychologist can help us understand our thoughts and feelings better and think about pain in a different way. This is called **pain coping skills training**. Or we can use “biofeedback,” a tool that teaches us to pay attention to how our body reacts to pain, so that we can work on controlling those reactions.

Sometimes, doctors might give us medicine to help with sadness or stress, and some of those meds may also help a little with our pain.

We can also talk to people who are going through the same things. This is called peer support.

Plus, there are things we can do on our own to help us feel better, like taking deep breaths, imagining a happy place, drawing or painting, or spending time outside.

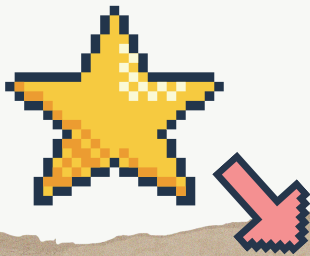
It's okay to feel sad, scared, lonely, or frustrated because of pain. Just know that there are lots of different ways to feel better, and it's important to find what works best for you!



About U.S. Pain Foundation

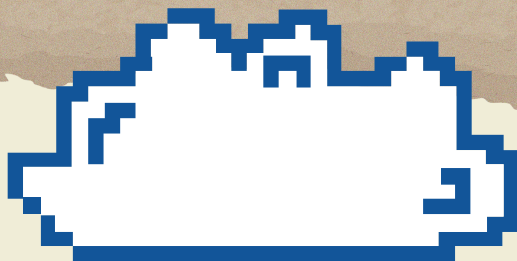
The U.S. Pain Foundation works to make sure everyone who deals with pain, plus their families and doctors, has the support they need. And guess what? All our programs and services are totally free!

- ***INvisible Project*** - A special magazine that shares stories from people who have chronic pain, including kids. You can read it online or order a magazine to keep.
- **State and Federal Advocacy** - We talk to the people who make laws to make sure everyone can get the help they need without it costing too much.
- **Pain Connection** - We offer online peer support groups where people who also have pain can support each other. One of them is for parents and other people who help you.
- **Pediatric Pain Warrior Program** - Helps kids with pain (just like you!) and their families with super cool camps, special events, and chances to talk with experts.
- **Building Your Toolbox** - Just like Batman has his utility belt, this program teaches you and the people who take care of you about different ways to manage pain. Each month, learn something new!
- **MyPainPlan.org** - A website where you can learn about lots of different treatments for pain. You can even make a list of ones you want to talk about with your doctor.
- **Storybank** - This is the place to share YOUR story! It might help someone else feel less alone.
- **Volunteer Network** - A team of people working hard to spread awareness about chronic pain and make sure everyone knows how important it is to help each other out.



Find out more at uspainfoundation.org.

This educational booklet was created with support from Kenvue. The U.S. Pain Foundation independently developed the content without review from its sponsor. This information is for educational purposes only and may not be used as a substitute for advice from a health care professional.



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