



# PERSISTENT PAIN TREATMENT | The Team Approach

## What are the Goals of a Team Approach to Pain Management?

**The team approach can help you to take control of your pain and regain a normal and active lifestyle. During and after your treatment, you will**

- ▶ Be better able to exercise, walk, and return to your daily activities with decreased pain.
- ▶ Be more aware of pain triggers (depression, anger) and be better able to relax your mind and thoughts.
- ▶ Understand more about treatments and medications and how they help your pain.
- ▶ See an improvement in your social relationships and your communication with family and friends.
- ▶ Be able to return to your job with confidence, increased self-esteem, and decreased pain.

## What is a team approach to pain management?

A team approach to pain management is a type of treatment plan that combines the knowledge and skills of several healthcare professionals who work with your primary healthcare provider to help manage your pain.

## How does this approach work?

Your primary healthcare provider will perform a detailed physical examination to discover the main cause(s) of your pain. During the examination, you may be asked about the history and location of your pain, any previous pain treatments and medications that you have taken, how well you cope with pain, and any current stress or factors that may be affecting your pain. Then, depending on the severity of your pain, your healthcare provider may consult with other specialists to discuss the best treatment plan for you based on the results of your exam. Once you begin treatment, the team of specialists will follow-up with you regularly to see how your pain level and daily activities have improved.

## What types of specialists might be involved in this approach?

Here are some specialists who may be a part of your pain management team:

- ▶ **Pain specialist:** A pain specialist treats patients who experience pain related to a specific cause (for example, pain from an injury) and those who suffer from pain as a condition (for example, headaches). Pain specialists diagnose conditions, provide treatment, and counsel patients and their families.
- ▶ **Neurologist:** A neurologist may be a pain specialist and will examine the nerves in your neck and spinal cord, muscle movement and strength, balance, and reflexes, to help determine the cause of your pain, and determine treatment.
- ▶ **Orthopedist:** An orthopedist will make sure that your bones and muscles are not injured. He or she will also test the movement of your head, shoulders, back, arms, and legs to determine the cause(s) of your pain.
- ▶ **Psychologist:** Pain can have deep psychological effects on the mind, including feelings of hopelessness, anger, and despair. These feelings can affect your ability to engage in normal daily activities. A *psychologist* will conduct an interview with you to learn more about your pain experience (for example, pain history, medications, and mood changes).
- ▶ **Physical therapist:** A physical therapist will use exercises, stretches, and other techniques to help you improve mobility, decrease pain, and reduce any disability related to illness or injury. Physical therapy may also include an education program (understanding pain), or manual therapy (help balance muscle and stretch tight skin).



The National Initiative on Pain Control® (NIPC®) is sponsored by Professional Postgraduate Services®, Secaucus, NJ.

The NIPC is supported by an educational grant from Endo Pharmaceuticals Inc.

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- ▶ **Occupational therapist:** An occupational therapist will assess the way pain affects your ability to perform job duties and help you develop, recover, and/or maintain your work skills. They will talk with you and/or your employer to find and remove anything that can cause accidents or injury in your work space (for example, correct how you sit and type in front of a computer or add more lighting).
- ▶ **Pharmacist:** Together with other healthcare providers, a *pharmacist* helps to manage pain by educating you about your medications, identifying side effects that may arise with certain medications, regularly reviewing medications to make sure that there are no safety issues, and monitoring whether you are following your treatment plan.
- ▶ **Social worker:** A social worker uses strategies, such as relaxation training and goal setting, to help you and your family cope with your pain. He or she works with the multidisciplinary pain management team to address barriers to treatment, including fear of drug addiction, insurance issues, child/family care, or transportation. The social worker also provides information on community resources, such as support groups.
- ▶ **Nurse:** A nurse will assist in providing care and helping you follow your treatment plan. He or she can help to make communication easier between the members of your multidisciplinary treatment team, as well as between you and the specialists who are treating you.

## What else should I know about this approach?

The team approach to pain management can place you on the right track by providing you with the necessary skills and medical treatments for managing your pain.

- ▶ Among the therapists already mentioned, you may also meet with a family counselor, massage therapist, psychiatrist, or other healthcare provider trained to manage pain.
- ▶ Treatment should fit with your lifestyle, whether it is inpatient care (treatment that is provided in a hospital or other location and requires an overnight stay), outpatient care (treatment that does not require an overnight stay), or both.
- ▶ Treatment programs may include group therapy, relaxation and stress management, and educational programs, among others.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION: Talk to Your Healthcare Provider.

Newbridge Spine & Pain Center  
Frederick (301) 668-9988  
Waldorf (301) 638-4400  
PrinceFrederick (410) 414-9229  
[www.NewbridgeSpine.com](http://www.NewbridgeSpine.com)

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

The following organizations have information regarding pain management programs and healthcare providers:

- ▶ American Academy of Pain Management  
[www.aapainmanage.org](http://www.aapainmanage.org)
- ▶ American Pain Foundation  
[www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org)
- ▶ American Pain Society  
[www.ampainsoc.org](http://www.ampainsoc.org)
- ▶ Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities  
[www.carf.org](http://www.carf.org)

**REFERENCES** ACT Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Society. Multidisciplinary pain management. Available at: [www.mecfscanberra.org/au/pain/mdpc.htm](http://www.mecfscanberra.org/au/pain/mdpc.htm) • Booker C, Nicol M. *Nursing adults: the practice of caring*. St Louis, MO: Mosby; 2003. • Chen PP. Multidisciplinary approach to chronic pain management. *HKMJ*. 1996;2(4):401-404. • Golden BA. A multidisciplinary approach to nonpharmacologic pain management. *JAOA*. 2002;102 (suppl 3):S1-S5. • International Association of the Study of Pain. Outline curriculum on pain for schools of occupational therapy and physical therapy. Available at: <http://www.iasp-pain.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=1806> • International Association of the Study of Pain. Pain clinic guidelines. Available at: [http://www.iasp-pain.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Pain\\_Treatment\\_Facilities&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=9106](http://www.iasp-pain.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Pain_Treatment_Facilities&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=9106) • Smiles SS. A team approach to pain management: A conversation with Demaceo Howard, MD, and W. Keith Barnhill, PhD. Available at: <http://www.iasp-pain.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=1806> • Stanford School of Medicine. Psychological therapy. Available at: [www.paincenter.stanford.edu/patient\\_care/therapy.html](http://www.paincenter.stanford.edu/patient_care/therapy.html) • UWHealth. Physical and occupational therapy. Available at: <http://www.uwhealth.org/chronicpain/physicalandoccupation-althrapy/12056>. All websites accessed July 9, 2009.