



IMG PHYSICAL THERAPY

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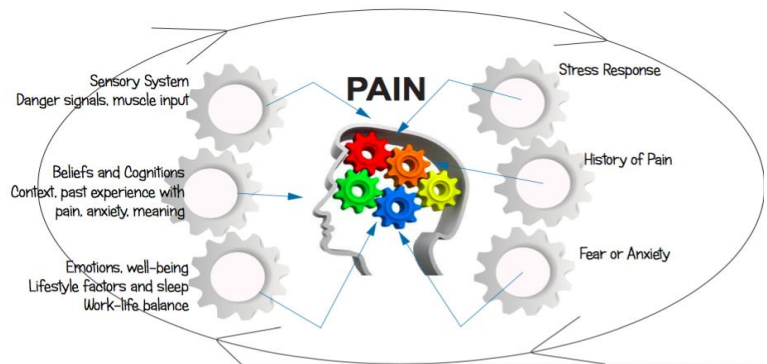
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Chronic Low Back Pain - Beyond Physical Treatment

Chronic Low Back Pain

is defined as low back pain that lasts more than 12 weeks. While most chronic low back pain will improve with the usual physical treatments (medication, rest, injections, or physical therapy), some instances require a different approach. Understanding how pain works in the brain and how biopsychosocial factors can impact pain may be the best approach. If you think this approach may be best for you, schedule an appointment with IMGPT for an evaluation today.

Pain Interpreted in the Brain



Points to Remember

- Chronic pain is different than acute pain. Chronic pain is not a good indicator of damage.
- Chronic pain involves the nervous system and an 'increased volume'.
- Pain is not a conscience decision, but thoughts and decisions can impact pain turning the volume up or down.
- The brain is interconnected and forms patterns. Sometimes pain is connected with movement, which makes it hurt to move or even think about moving.
- Biopsychosocial factors – emotions, beliefs, environment – affect pain and need to be addressed to turn down pain.
- You can regain control and begin the positive cycle by increasing activity, working towards personal goals and thinking differently about pain.

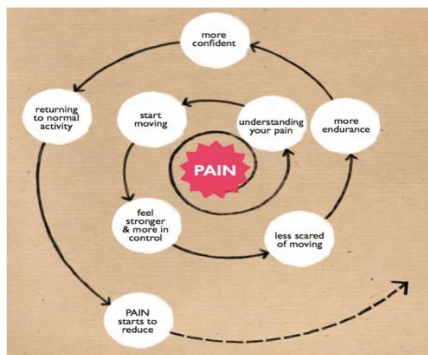
Your back is one of the strongest structures in your body – it is very difficult to permanently damage your low back



When the 'volume' is high on pain, our thoughts can play an important role in **magnifying** pain or quieting it. If the volume has been high for a long time, a slow process of **graded exposure** to **movement** can help turn the **volume down**.

Motion is Lotion!

Relaxed, unguarded movement will help your back pain settle. Muscle guarding – increased tension in the muscles can contribute to low back pain.



A great way quiet pain is to **focus** on you **goals** rather than the cause of your pain. Activity goals can **strengthen** the body and retrain the nervous system to **dissociate** pain and movement. Start slowly and progress without pain.

Tips to stop the downward spiral and turn down the volume on pain

1.) Increase General Activity

Staying active and improving your fitness can be difficult with chronic pain, but gradually increasing activity levels can reverse the negative cycle of pain and inactivity. Exercise can strengthen weak muscles, improve endurance, and improve mood.

Start with low intensity general exercise like walking or biking. Commit to 20-30 minutes 3-5 times a week. If you have been inactive for several months you may still feel pain or soreness when you start. Remember that pain is not the same as damage.

2.) Work towards personal goals

Focus on things you want to do and gradually work towards those things, instead of trying to 'fix' your pain. Concentrating on a goal can distract you from pain and help your brain shift focus to other areas. Make the goal(s) important to you and realistic. Trying to run a marathon in 3 months is probably not realistic, but doing the dishes without sitting down or walking several blocks may be more realistic.

3.) Think differently about pain

Many who suffer from chronic pain think about pain often, if not constantly. This can lead to anxiety. If you find yourself fixated on your thoughts about pain, you may need to learn more about how pain works. Remember pain is the interpretation of input from the brain. Seek out more information about pain education from these websites: These two resources have workbooks to help understand the relationship between pain and the brain and provided much of the content in this hand out:

<http://know.pain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/TazzyPersistentPainBooklet.pdf>

<http://www.greglehman.ca/2015/02/02/pain-science-workbook/>

The NOI group published a book called Explain Pain which is useful, but expensive. The link below has free resources available from the same group.

<http://www.noigroup.com/en/Resources>

When thoughts about pain take over, deep breathing techniques can calm harmful thoughts. The link below has a quick five-minute breathing technique to calm anxiety.

<http://www.mindful.org/a-five-minute-breathing-meditation/>

