Pain management

Types of pain
There are two main types of pain.
- Acute pain, also known as short-term pain; this is pain that started recently
- Chronic, long-term pain, or persistent pain is pain that has lasted for three months or more

Pain medication
Pain medication is commonly used to directly or indirectly alter pain. If you feel your pain is not being managed with your current regime, discuss this with your GP, consultant or pain management specialist.

Acupuncture
Acupuncture is a form of ancient Chinese medicine where fine needles are inserted into your skin at certain points on your body. It is based on the belief that an energy or 'life force' flows through the body in channels called meridians. This life force is known as qi (pronounced 'chee'). 'Blockages' in qi can result in illness and pain. Placing needles at certain points around your body is thought to 'unblock' qi and help relieve symptoms such as back pain. Many experts believe that the beneficial effects of acupuncture on chronic back pain are actually due to the needles stimulating nerves and muscles while encouraging your body to release naturally occurring painkillers, called endorphins. Side effects are usually mild and only occur in 1 in 10 cases.

Exercise
Exercise is often advised to promote well being, stimulate endorphin production (chemicals that make you feel better) and alter pain signals travelling from you body to your brain. Exercise helps to strengthen your muscles and improve your posture. Exercise may also strengthen your heart and lower your blood pressure.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
CBT is a type of psychological therapy that is widely used for people with chronic back pain. It is based on the principle that the way you feel partly depends on the way that you think. Studies have shown that people who train themselves to react differently to pain by using relaxation techniques and maintaining a positive attitude reported lower levels of pain. They were also more likely to remain active and take regular exercise, further reducing the severity of their symptoms.
Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)

TENS is a small machine that delivers gentle electrical pulses to the body via electrodes that are placed on the skin. The pulses stimulate endorphin production and prevent pain signals travelling from your body to your brain.

Expert patient programme

Expert patient programme community interest company (EPP CIC) provide and deliver free courses aimed at helping people who are living with a long-term health condition to manage their condition better.

Expert patients programme courses are usually run over six weekly sessions of 2½ hours and look at a number of topics including:

- Dealing with pain and extreme tiredness
- Coping with feelings of depression
- Relaxation techniques and exercise
- Healthy eating
- Communicating with family, friends and professionals
- Planning for the future

The aim is to give people the confidence to take more responsibility in self-managing their health. This allows them to work collaboratively with health and social care professionals.

For more information or to find a course in your local area go to:

www.expertpatients.co.uk

For more information on how to manage your pain go to:

www.nhs.uk/livewell/pain/pages/longtermpain.aspx

www.paintoolkit.org

People with persistent pain may be able to attend a specialist pain clinic for assessment and possible pain management. You need to be referred to a pain clinic by your GP or consultant.

More information is also available on:

www.britishpainsociety.org/patient-pmp.htm