

Getting Help from Professionals

Every child is unique and so is their pain, so always work with your child's physician and behavioral health provider to adapt the treatment plan to best fit your child's needs.

- *Seek help from professionals if:*
 - Your child is frequently missing school or other activities.
 - Your child's mood is significantly affected by his/her pain.
 - Your child frequently worries about pain (or demonstrates excessive worries in general).
 - Your child's doctor cannot identify a cause for your child's pain and the pain does not resolve on its own.
 - Your child is using or needs increasing amounts of pain medications.
 - You are concerned about your child's safety.



- *Who to see for help:*
 - **Pediatrician**
 - Your child's pediatrician can help coordinate treatment including referrals to other specialties like pain management doctors or physical therapists.
 - **Behavioral Health Provider:**
 - This can include: Pediatric Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Clinical Social Worker, or Professional Counselor
 - **NOTE:** It is crucial that your provider has been trained to use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which has been proved to improve function and pain.

Your Child's Hospital Care

Child's Name: _____

Hospital Name: _____

Admission and Discharge Dates: _____

Reason for Admission: _____

Diagnosis: _____

Providers who worked with your child: _____

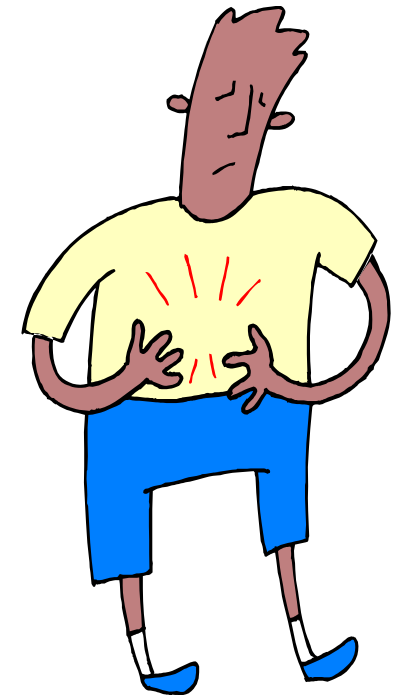
Treatment Plan: _____

Outpatient Follow-up Plans: _____

Who to call with questions or emergencies: _____

Chronic Pain in Children and Adolescents:

Information for Parents And Caregivers





Chronic Pain in Children/Teens

When a child develops chronic pain it can take on a life of its own; like a faulty alarm system that is set off by every little sound or move. Many things inside our body and in our environment can cause the pain to continue or to hurt worse or more often. For example, things like stress and not sleeping well can make pain worse. Unfortunately, simple solutions to improve pain usually do not exist. This can leave children and their families feeling stuck, as if there is nothing they can do to improve the pain.

But with the right combination of treatments we can have great success at improving functioning and pain. Just like a car needs all four tires to be able to drive, an effective pain treatment program typically includes multiple types of treatment including:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Evaluation for possible medicines
- Consideration of complimentary & alternative therapies(e.g. acupuncture)

Helping Your Child/Teen Cope with Pain

Research shows there are some things you and your child can do to help reduce the amount of pain your child/teen experiences and how much it interferes with your child's ability to participate in his/her normal activities. Below are some suggestions for how you can help reduce your child's pain and improve functioning:

Promote and Practice Coping Skills

- Relax (deep/diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation)
<http://copingclub.com/amber-shows-some-belly-breathing-techniques/>
- Think about something fun (imagery)
- Do something fun or distracting
 - Play a game, read a book, talk to a friend

Encourage Healthy Behavior

- Ensure your child gets good sleep and eats well
- Focus on functioning during pain
 - Set goals to increase functioning
 - Praise progress - "Great job completing your physical therapy exercises today!"

Minimize attention/discussion of pain

- Don't continually ask about pain
- Stay calm even if your child is not
- Share your worries with other adults instead of your child
- Don't bargain or negotiate with your child around pain
 - Research shows it is actually helpful to maintain normal routine like school and chores.
- Give extra attention and affection when your child is coping well with pain.
 - Paying attention to your child's pain actually makes it hurt worse!

Helping Your Child/Teen Manage Pain in School

In general...

- Your goal should be to work towards having your child attend school for the full day as soon as possible, even if the pain has not fully resolved.
- Work with school to set up a 504 plan for accommodations to help your child succeed in school.
- Plan for a time-limited rest break if pain arises at school.
- Have your child continue to participate in activities but have a plan to manage any activities that might worsen pain.
- Prepare a plan for your child to use their pain coping strategies at school.
- Gradually and steadily increase your child's participation in physical & social activities they have been avoiding due to pain.
- Remember, most pain is not worsened by school attendance. Maintaining school routines helps pain and functioning in the long-term. Your child can have pain and have a normal kid life – as opposed to having pain and missing out on important childhood experiences.
 - Research indicates we cannot wait for pain to get better before returning to activities – in fact, pain actually improves in response to returning to normal activities!



References:

- Spirito, A & Kazak, AE. *Effective and Emerging Treatments in Pediatric Psychology*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Dahlquist, L.M. & Switkin, M.C.(2003). Chronic and Recurrent Pain. In Roberts, M (ed). *Handbook of Pediatric Psychology, 3rd edition*. (pp. 198-215) Guilford Press, 2003.
- Coakley, R & Schechter, N. (2013). *Chronic pain is like... The clinical use of analogy and metaphor in the treatment of chronic pain in children*. Pediatric Pain Letter: 15. 1.