

## Self-help information for patients with persistent (chronic) pain

Pain can affect just about every aspect of people's lives. It can affect:

- The way people move
- How much they do
- How far they go
- How able they are to take part in activities
- How confident and optimistic they feel.
- Relationships with others
- How well they sleep or concentrate
- How much they enjoy life.

### What can you do to help yourself?

Whilst it may not be possible to get rid of the pain, it is possible to significantly reduce the disability and distress it causes by:-

#### 1. Setting goals

Setting goals for each day and for the longer term, can help keep the body and mind active. This also helps give direction to your recovery. In time, these goals can become more challenging but you have to break them down into small and manageable steps.

#### 2. Keeping physically active and eating well

Research shows that people with persistent pain who keep active tend to feel better and can do more. When in persistent pain, movements or activities that can make pain worse do not necessarily involve further damage or injury. Physical activity can increase the level of endorphins (natural pain killers) in our body, reducing pain the natural way. Ask your GP about local exercise or referral schemes.

The following organisations can help you to live a healthy lifestyle, such as stopping smoking, being more physically active and eating healthily:-

- Everyone Health provide stop smoking support in Bristol: email [eh.bristol@nhs.net](mailto:eh.bristol@nhs.net) or telephone 0333 005 0095 or go to <https://www.everyonehealth.co.uk/bristol-council/>
- North Somerset Health Trainer Service provides support on healthy eating and healthy weight, get active, and stop smoking. For more information visit: <https://go4lifens.wordpress.com/go4life-schemes/health-trainers/> or telephone 01934 427661
- One You South Gloucestershire provides support to lose weight, be more active and stop smoking. Go to <https://oneyou.southglos.gov.uk/what-we-offer/> or telephone 01454 865337.
- Versus Arthritis run a free, digital physical activity programme, called Let's Move with Leon. It is a 30 minute movement session, designed specifically for people with arthritis and related conditions.

Go to <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/lets-move-with-leon/>

- ESCAPE-pain exercise and education courses are available in the following gyms. For more information watch this two minute video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14CQ4wrJXRM>
  - Greenway Centre in Southmead, for more information telephone 0117 950 3335
  - Brunel Fitness Centre in Speedwell, for more info email [bristol@almsport.co.uk](mailto:bristol@almsport.co.uk)
  - Circadian Trust in Bradley Stoke, Kingswood, Longwell Green, Thornbury and Yate, for more information contact [Jim.Rollo@circadiantrust.org](mailto:Jim.Rollo@circadiantrust.org)
- There are walking for health groups in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Go to the national website to find your nearest walking group: <https://www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/>
- Bristol Walk Fest is an annual walking festival – a celebration of walking and walks throughout the city. Go to <https://www.bristolwalkfest.com/> for more information.

### 3. Psychological support

VitaMinds provide self-guided on line support, group courses for stress and low mood for people with long term conditions and 1 to 1 support. For more information go to their website

<https://www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/nhs-services/nhs-mental-health/bristol-north-somerset-south-gloucestershire/>. People can self-refer by using the link here: <https://www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/nhs-services/nhs-mental-health/bristol-north-somerset-south-gloucestershire/self-refer/> or by telephoning 0333 2001893.

**There are three helplines that you can telephone for support:-**

- **Pain Concern helpline, on 0300 123 0789, available Monday and Friday, 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm**
- **Action on Pain helpline, on 0345 6031593, available Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm**
- **Versus Arthritis helpline, on 08005200520, available Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm**

**The opening hours of these helplines may change depending on availability of the volunteers who staff them.**

### 4. Pacing

Carrying on physical activity to the point of unmanageable pain or exhaustion is rarely helpful. Taking regular breaks in activities, changing position, resting briefly between activities or doing stretches throughout the day can all help.

### 5. Relaxation

Practising relaxation techniques regularly can help to reduce persistent pain. Learning to relax can help you sleep, get good quality rest and cope well with stressful and difficult situations. There are many types of relaxation technique and there may be classes available locally that can teach you relaxation, for more information go to [www.wellaware.org.uk](http://www.wellaware.org.uk) There are also many books, CDs or videos on relaxation techniques, go to <http://www.paincd.org.uk/>

## 6. Breathing correctly

Stress and pain can lead us to breathe incorrectly, taking short shallow breaths from our chest. This type of breathing can cause unpleasant symptoms such as tension, dizziness, racing heart, difficulties concentrating, chest tightness and pins & needles. The correct way to breathe is from the tummy not the chest. When you breathe in your tummy should move out a little, when you breathe out, your tummy should fall in slightly. Your upper chest should stay still at all times.

Relaxed, slow breathing from the tummy helps you stay calm and relaxed. A lot of people with pain have said that learning to breathe like this was one of the most important things they learned.

## 7. Socialising

Having contact with people can play an enormous part in helping you feel better. Pain can make it hard to get out to see people or to join in with what they are doing, but social contact can be at home, over a cup of tea, within whatever limits you have. It has been shown that keeping in touch with friends and family is good for our overall health.

If you are over 50 and are feeling isolated or lonely you can get support from:-

- **North Somerset Community Connectors:** Tel: 01275 888803 or <https://www.curo-group.co.uk/independent-lives/whats-on-in-your-community/north-somerset-community-connect/>
- **South Gloucestershire One You** Tel: 01454 864005 or [Mental Health and Wellbeing Support | One You South Gloucestershire \(southglos.gov.uk\)](https://www.southglos.gov.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing-support)
- **LinkAge** - social activities for people 55+ in Bristol Tel: 0117 3533042 or [www.linkagenetwork.org.uk/](http://www.linkagenetwork.org.uk/) or email [linkage@ageukbristol.org.uk](mailto:linkage@ageukbristol.org.uk)

## 8. Enjoyment

Sometimes you may concentrate on what you must do and forget the enjoyable activities. Try to find the time to phone a friend or go out to the cinema, even if you have to leave halfway through. Be pleased with the things that you have accomplished. Try to include at least one enjoyable activity in your list of things to do every day. Fun and pleasure stimulate serotonin (known as the happiness hormone) in our body. Raising serotonin levels can reduce pain, improve sleep and our mood.

## 9. Distraction

Shift your attention onto something else so the pain isn't the only thing on your mind. Get stuck into an activity that you enjoy or find stimulating. Many hobbies (like photography, sewing or knitting) are possible even when your mobility is restricted.

## 10. Medicine

Medicines are often used for persistent pain and may give valuable relief. They are just one of the many tools in our 'toolbox' and you should use them alongside all of the other tools. The aim should be to use the minimum amount of medicines needed to allow you to increase your general activity and exercise.

## Useful websites

- **The British Pain Society** has information leaflets that you can download, as well as a list of addresses and links to other websites, go to [www.britishpainsociety.org.uk](http://www.britishpainsociety.org.uk)
- **Pain Concern** provides information and support for pain sufferers, those who care for them and about them, free factsheets and leaflets to help you manage your pain, go to [www.painconcern.org.uk](http://www.painconcern.org.uk)
- **Action on Pain** is a growing national charity that provides practical help and support to people living with or affected by chronic pain. The charity is run by a team of people who have direct experience of living and dealing with long-term pain conditions, go to [www.action-on-pain.co.uk](http://www.action-on-pain.co.uk)
- **This Pain Toolkit** website provides handy tips and skills to support people along the way to managing their pain, go to [www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)
- **A way with pain**, a website dedicated to providing information and support to those living with chronic pain, go to [www.awaywithpain.co.uk](http://www.awaywithpain.co.uk)
- The **PainSupport** website aims to help people in pain move forward in their lives with better pain self-management, go to <https://painsupport.co.uk/>
- [www.bodyreprogramming.org](http://www.bodyreprogramming.org) for fibromyalgia
- **Join the movement:**  
[https://www.sportengland.org/jointhemovement?section=join\\_the\\_movement&gclid=CPLA8rGnjOOCFUG4GwodxGkOQQ](https://www.sportengland.org/jointhemovement?section=join_the_movement&gclid=CPLA8rGnjOOCFUG4GwodxGkOQQ)
- **Move it or Lose it:** <https://www.moveitorloseit.co.uk/>
- **We Are Undefeatable:** <https://weareundefeatable.co.uk/>
- **10 Today:** <https://10today.co.uk/>
- **Cycling in Bristol:** <https://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/sports-and-adventure/cycling>

## Useful Apps

The following apps may assist with managing long term pain:

- The getUBetter app helps people when recovering from a new or recurring MSK Injury or condition. There are 7 pathways available, back, back and leg, shoulder, neck, knee, lower limb and ankle. There are physiotherapy videos and advice. Available here: <https://bnssgccg.nhs.uk/health-advice-and-support/self-care/> or from GPs and First Contact Physiotherapists
- The Joint school app helps people waiting for hip and knee replacement surgery. Getting fit for surgery will reduce the amount of time in hospital and improve recovery. For more information go to <https://www.jointschool.app/>
- Pain Toolkit (PainSense), for more information go to <https://pain-sense.co.uk/the-apps/the-pain-toolkit/>