

What is Chronic Pain?

"Every movement is very painful."-Cee Cee, Patient

"It's just hard to get up and down."-Sue, Patient

"It always hurts."-John, Patient

For people with chronic pain, just making it through each day can be difficult.

"We define chronic pain as pain that lasted longer than three months. Longer than would be expected for the typical healing course of a particular disease process or an injury or let's say, recovering from surgery."-Dr. Sarah Endrizzi, Pain Clinic Medical Director

For John Zemler, a university professor, even picking up a pencil to do the artwork he loves can be challenging.

"I've got some issues in my neck and my lower back missing a few bones here and there."-John, Patient

John has injuries stemming back to his years in the Army, complicated by a nasty fall he took recently when his shoelace got caught in an escalator.

"Four tears in my shoulder, three in the rotator cuff, one in the labrum, nerve compression in my elbow and nerve compression aggravated from previous nerve compression in my right wrist. My pain was disabling me from being able to do my job. I can type. But it will have residual effects that if I do too much, my right arm will shut down and I won't be able to use it at all."-John, Patient

"Sometimes chronic pain occurs after an injury an accident or a surgery, but other times pain occurs because of the disease process itself."- Dr. Sarah Endrizzi, Pain Clinic Medical Director

One such disease process, is Rheumatoid arthritis. Sue Schneeberg often finds her arthritis interferes with daily life with her young son.

"We'll make plans. We're going to have a mommy Sunday to the zoo and then I wake up and I'm in so much pain I can barely walk, and I have to cancel. And it upsets him I think he's beginning, even though he's 5, he's beginning to kind of understand why mommy has her good days and bad days. It just stinks when I have to break promises to him."-Sue, Patient

A bad day for Sue is totally exhausting.

"When I have a flare-up, usually anything that I have planned that day gets pushed to the side because I have to take care of me. I usually get a fever and I feel very rundown. I mean even the littlest effort like opening a bottle of water just takes so much energy and a lot of times I can't even do it myself. I have to have somebody

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do it for me because my hands just decide not to work because they're so swollen and it just hurts to bend.”-Sue, Patient

That all-over, achy feeling is something Cee Cee Ceman has dealt with for years, whenever her fibromyalgia flares up.

“It’s feeling like you’ve been hit with the flu all of a sudden where your body just aches, and your hair hurts just everything. You just want to go straight to bed.”-Cee Cee, Patient

While Cee Cee’s fibromyalgia usually involves widespread pain in her muscles and bones, sometimes it will just attack a single body part out of the blue.

“Just like right just on my arm and I’m thinking maybe I’m on the computer, using the mouse too much or you know. Who knows. And then it’s gone, and it never comes back in that same area again.”-Cee Cee, Patient

Depending on the condition that’s causing your chronic pain, there are treatments that may provide relief, so you can do the everyday things you enjoy. These might include pain medications, pain-focused injections, physical, occupational or behavioral therapy, or alternative treatments such as acupuncture or massage.

“I don’t expect that any one thing that I’m going to offer for you is going to cure your pain. But I’m hoping that we can get little bits of pain relief from each of these different areas and kind of put that picture together to improve your you know overall functionality.”- Dr. Sarah Endrizzi, Pain Clinic Medical Director

It’s not surprising that anyone who deals with ongoing pain can be tired, irritable, anxious or depressed, and that can actually make their pain even worse.

“That’s kind of a vicious cycle that we work with patients to break.”- Dr. Sarah Endrizzi, Pain Clinic Medical Director

If you’re dealing with chronic pain, it’s important to work with your healthcare team, to come up with a plan to give you some relief so you can go about living life the way you want.