

Pain

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What is Pain?

Many people with cancer experience pain at some point in time. It may be caused or related to the cancer itself or its treatments including chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery.

Experiencing pain can have a range of impacts including physical (reduced mobility, sleep, energy) and emotional (low mood, worry, doing fewer pleasurable activities).

How can you manage pain?

It is important to involve your medical team in the management of your pain to target the biological aspects of pain (for example with medication). Let your doctors and treating team know about your pain throughout your cancer treatment.

The good news is there are also things you can do to help manage your pain. This includes learning to think differently about pain, doing more of the things that are important to you, and learning how to build up your activity levels.

Thinking differently about pain

Notice when your thoughts about pain have become extreme and may be unhelpful (e.g. "I'll never achieve anything with this pain"). Try to rephrase these thoughts so that they are more realistic (e.g. "I notice the pain right now, but also know I can still do some of the things that are important to me").

Focus on your other sensations by noticing 5 things you can see, 5 things you can hear, 5 things you can smell and 5 other (pleasant and/or non-painful) sensations you can feel.

Doing more of the things that are important to you

Try to make time to do small things that you enjoy. Plan for this in advance and schedule this in. If it helps, involves significant others including friends or family members in your plans.

Learning how to build up and pace your activity

- Add in rest periods
- Build up slowly. Do not do more activity than you have planned, even on a good day
- If you have a bad day, try to keep to your plan but be kind to yourself
- If your pain flares up, go back one level and pace back up again
- Reward yourself when you achieve small steps or goals

Where can you get additional help?

Speak to your treating doctor. You may wish to consider accessing additional support from allied health services including psychologists or physiotherapists to help manage your pain. Your doctor will be able to speak with you about how this applies to you.

Further information and support services

Further information

Cancer Council Victoria - Overcoming cancer pain booklet

[Visit Website](#)

Cancer Council Victoria - Frequently asked questions about cancer pain

[Visit Website](#)

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) - Managing cancer-related pain guide

[Download Guide](#)

Finding a mental health professional

You can begin by speaking to your General Practitioner (GP). GPs can discuss your emotional concerns with you and can link you to supports in the local community, such as a psychologist or social worker.

You can also speak to your cancer clinician. Most cancer services have a range of psychological support options including psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists. If this isn't available at your local health service, ask them what support is available in the local community.

You can find a local Psychologist with a referral or a mental health care plan from your GP.

Search for a local Psychologist

[Visit Website](#)

Search for a local Psychiatrist

[Visit Website](#)

Health Direct

Health Direct provides information about what a mental health care plan is and how you can work with your GP to access a mental health care plan.

[Visit Website](#)

Online self-help programs and smartphone apps

This Way Up - Chronic pain course

This Way Up is a trusted Australian provider of evidence-based, internet-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (iCBT) programs.

[Visit Website](#)

MindSpot - Pain course

A digital mental health clinic for all Australians.

[Visit Website](#)

Podcasts

Cancer Council podcast - The thing about cancer – Managing cancer pain

[Visit Website](#)

BBC podcast: You me and the big C – Managing the pain (UK)

[Visit Website](#)

Relaxation and mindfulness

Cancer Council NSW – Finding calm during cancer

Meditation and relaxation practices

[Visit Website](#)

Headspace

Meditation and mindfulness app

[Visit Website](#)

Smiling Mind

Web and app-based meditation program

[Visit Website](#)

Cancer support services

Cancer Council Victoria

A non-profit cancer charity organisation involved in cancer research, patient support, cancer prevention and advocacy.

[Call 13 11 20 to speak with a cancer nurse](#)

[Visit Website](#)

[Support Groups](#)

[Cancer Connect peer support](#)

[Online Community](#)

WeCan

A supportive care website

[Visit Website](#)

Telephone support services

Beyond Blue

All calls are with a trained mental health professional, and completely confidential. They will only ask you your first name and you can remain completely anonymous.

[Phone: 1300 224 636](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Lifeline

Lifeline provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis have access to 24-hour crisis support by trained professional

[Phone: 13 11 14](#)

[Visit Website](#)

Disclaimer

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Content is sourced from published research literature, grey literature sources (e.g. clinical guidelines) and opinions of clinical experts. It is not intended to reflect all of the available evidence and is not intended to be exhaustive.

The authors acknowledge that it is possible that other relevant guidelines or scientific findings may have been published since the development of the website.