

What is Pain Awareness Month?

Pain Awareness Month is a time when various organizations work to raise public awareness of issues in the area of pain and pain management. About 100 million Americans suffer from chronic pain, more than those who have diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined.

What is chronic pain?

Chronic pain is defined as pain that lasts longer than six months. Living with pain can be unbearable and adversely affect everyday life. Chronic pain can be mild or excruciating, episodic or continuous, merely inconvenient or totally incapacitating.

Pain is a warning sign that a problem that needs attention. With chronic pain, signals of pain remain active in the nervous system for months or even years. This can take both a physical and emotional toll on a person.

The most common sources of pain stem from headaches, joint pain, pain from injury, and backaches. Other kinds of chronic pain include tendinitis; sinus pain; carpal tunnel syndrome; and pain affecting specific parts of the body, such as the shoulders, pelvis, and neck. Generalized muscle or nerve pain can also develop into a chronic condition.

Pain starts in receptor nerve cells located beneath the skin and in organs throughout the body. Chronic pain may originate with an initial trauma/injury or infection, or there may be an ongoing cause of pain. Some people suffer chronic pain in the absence of any past injury or evidence of body damage.

Apps for your smartphone

- [My Pain Diary](#)
- Pain Diary & Forum – Catch My Pain, [iPhone](#) or [Android](#)
- [WebMD Pain Coach](#)

Tips from our docs

This month, our healthy tip is brought to you by **Martin Hickey, MD**, NMHC's Chief Executive Officer.

The symptoms of chronic pain include:

- Mild to severe pain that does not go away
- Pain that may be described as shooting, burning, aching, or electrical
- Feeling of discomfort, soreness, tightness, or stiffness

Pain is not a symptom that exists alone. Other problems associated with pain can include:

- Fatigue
- Sleeplessness
- Withdrawal from activity and increased need to rest
- Weakened immune system
- Changes in mood including hopelessness, fear, depression, irritability, anxiety, and stress
- Disability

Additional resources

- [American Chronic Pain Society](#)
- [WebMD: Pain Management Health Center](#)