

# WHAT IS PAIN?



Pain means different things to different people. It can also be different to one person from day to day. It may cause discomfort, distress or agony. Pain can be steady, throbbing, stabbing, aching, or pinching. Pain is something that you feel physically; your body senses it. Pain is also something you feel emotionally. It is personal to you and is affected by your experiences. It is also affected by your mood from day to day. For example, on days you are feeling down or fatigued, you may notice pain more than on days when you are feeling happy and have lots of energy. It can sometimes be hard for others to understand exactly what you are feeling in relation to pain. Only you can describe it or define it. It is important to distinguish between **acute** and **chronic pain**.

## ACUTE PAIN

**Acute pain** is generally sudden in onset, and lasts a relatively short time. It is often an "emergency" pain signal. For example, your shoe may rub against your foot, causing you pain but no injury. If you ignore this warning sign, you can end up with a blister - damaged tissue - as well as pain. Acute pain generally disappears when the injury heals or the illness goes away (either of its own accord, or after successful treatment).

## CHRONIC PAIN

**Chronic or persistent pain** lasts for a long time (at least 3 months) and may range from mild to severe. It is said to be chronic when it is present for long periods of time. The pain may be constant or it may come and go (i.e., pain of migraines). It can indicate a long-lasting health problem, which may or may not be serious and may or may not be treatable. Chronic pain may go away (resolve) with time. However, it may be something that a person has to live with for the rest of their life (i.e., multiple sclerosis).

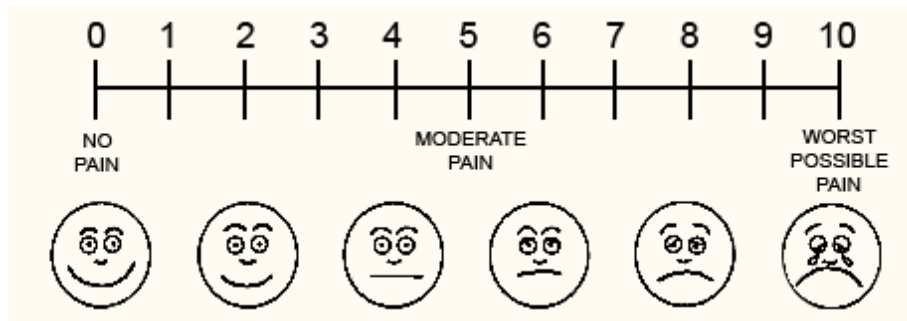
## Pain Management

Pain, whether it is severe or not, can be distracting, preventing a person from completing daily tasks without multiple breaks. If uncontrolled, chronic long-lasting pain can impact upon relationships with loved ones. Fortunately, pain can usually be controlled. The management of pain tackles both its physical and its emotional components, involving not only medications, but also stress relief and relaxation techniques, physical therapy and exercise.

It is essential for your well-being that you understand and address concerns in relation to pain. Pain is a very subjective experience for which there are no objective markers. Self-reporting is considered the most accurate and appropriate pain assessment method. All persons may and can experience pain from exercise or in relation to their disability, only you know how much pain you have or experience. Thus, you need to be able to communicate your pain to your fitness and health care professionals.

## Faces Pain Scale

The faces pain scale (FPS) shown consists of a numbered line scale (0 = no pain, 5 = moderate pain, 10 = worst pain possible) and a corresponding picture scale.



You can use either use the number scale, pictures or both to describe your level of pain experience. You may even want to describe your pain in terms such as dull, sharp, stabbing, etc. Tell your fitness professional where the pain is, exactly how it feels, what makes it better or worse, and what you are using to treat your pain. This way you can get the most out of your workout without experiencing increased or unnecessary pain.



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