

This resource is intended to support patients manage their chronic pain by highlighting a range of self-help options. It is primarily aimed at health care professionals to support their patients.

Pain affects different people in different ways and a patient-centred, individualised approach (including support from family and friends' networks) should always be taken into consideration when discussing the resources below in the management of chronic pain.

Medication

Medications such as opioids are very good analgesics for acute pain and for pain at the end of life but there is little evidence that they are helpful for long term pain. Some patients may 'feel' better emotionally on pain medication, but they won't always be helping control the pain. A small proportion of people may obtain good pain relief with opioids in the long-term if the dose can be kept low and especially if their use is intermittent (however it is difficult to identify these people at the point of opioid initiation).

Gabapentinoids may provide benefits for neuropathic pain in the short and in some cases medium term, but not for other types of chronic pain. Most importantly, gabapentinoids should not be combined with opioids due to [risk of death from overdose](#).

It is important to have a conversation with your prescriber to discuss the risks and benefits of opioid medications to ensure your pain is managed in the best way, before taking opioid medication. Be informed of the side effects associated with opioids, with the most common being nausea (feeling sick), vomiting, constipation, itching, dizziness, dry mouth and sleep problems.

Any medicines prescribed should be reviewed regularly for effectiveness, adverse effects and to confirm that the benefits continue to outweigh the risks and the patient's treatment goal is being met by the medicine(s) in question. Some helpful websites which provide support for patients and clinicians on medication prescribed for chronic pain:

- [Live Well With Pain website](#) – has some helpful resources for clinicians on exploring medication use, medication reviews, behaviour change, opioid prescribing.
- [Opioids Aware website](#) – has a number of resources for both patients and clinicians on pain and medicines for pain.

Sleep issues

Chronic pain can cause a lot of problems with sleep. Lack of sleep and struggling to sleep can also increase stress levels, making the pain worse. Resources include:

- The [BNSSG wellbeing leaflet](#) includes some useful advice to help better sleep.
- The [Sleep Council](#) offer a range of resources such as sleep tools and advice.
- For help developing a routine, you can visit [The Sleep Charity's website](#). There are resources, including planners and diaries, to help develop sleep routines that fit in with your life.
- Silver Cloud Programme - Patients registered with a BNSSG GP practice can access the online '[Space for Sleep](#)' programme run by Silver Cloud which uses a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) approach. Patients can create an online account and once registered can scroll down to the 'sleep better' option to access this module.
- [Sleepio](#) – a sleep improvement program, featuring proven (CBT) techniques and the [Sleep station](#) sleep improvement programme – are also options but a small cost maybe associated with accessing some of these programmes.

Weight management

Managing a healthy weight can help overcome chronic pain, weight reduction can decrease stress and weight-bearing pressure on muscles and joints, which can ease joint pain.

- The [NHS Digital Weight Management Programme](#) - supports adults living with obesity who also have diabetes or hypertension or both, to manage their weight and improve their health. This 12-week online behavioural and lifestyle programme can be accessed via a smartphone or computer with internet access.
- [The Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme](#) (NHS DPP) aims to support people who are at [high risk](#) of developing Type 2 diabetes and includes advice on how to lose weight.
- One You South Gloucestershire has been providing support to people to lose weight via a 12-week support plan. This is currently not available due to COVID but you can still access WW (previously called Weight Watchers) vouchers via the [OneYou website](#) or by telephoning 01454 865337
- North Somerset Council Healthy Lifestyles Advisors can offer healthy weight support. For more information see: [Lose Weight | Better Health North Somerset \(betterhealthns.co.uk\)](#) or email: getactive@n-somerset.gov.uk

Mood

- 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/>
- BNSSG Lifestyle leaflet - Mental wellbeing leaflet - BNSSG ICB have developed some resources to help people take responsibility for their health through lifestyle changes, this includes a [wellbeing leaflet](#).

Mindfulness Practice for Pain Management

- Bangor University has a number of guided mindfulness based practices that could be incorporated into a pain management plan: <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/mindfulness/audio/index.php.en>

There are some mindfulness apps available for apple or android devices:

- [Headspace](#): hundreds of themed sessions on everything from stress, sleep, focus and anxiety. Bite-sized guided meditations for busy schedules and SOS exercises.
- [Breathe](#): aims to help you de-stress, sleep better, get happier & be healthier with guided meditations, soothing music, nature sounds and masterclasses.
- [Insight Timer app](#): Free guided meditations
- For patients who prefer written resources, the book 'Mindfulness for health' by Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman may be of interest. This is a practical guide to relieving pain and restoring well-being.

Exercise

See BNSSG My Joint Health Hub which covers general information about conditions affecting your muscles, bones and joints (otherwise known as your musculoskeletal system) as well as some exercise information. [My Joint Health Hub - msk \(bnssg.nhs.uk\)](#)

Websites to help patients get more active:

- NHS [Get Active With A Disability](#) - A guide to getting active if you have a disability or long-term health condition
- My Live Well With Pain- [Getting active - Live Well with Pain](#)
- [NHS Fitness Studio](#) - They have visual stretching and exercising classes, including Tai Chi, Yoga and Pilates. All classes are free and available 24hours.
- [Move it or Lose it](#)
- [We Are Undefeatable](#) - Supports and encourages finding ways to be active that work with each person's conditions, not against them
- [10 Today](#) - 10 Today is an exercise programme from Sport England and Demos designed for older people to protect against poor health and improve mental health and maintain independence.

Dependence issues

Some patients may have tried to manage their pain using over the counter medicines or illicit medicines which have led to dependency or become dependent on prescription medication. Across BNSSG there are a number of organisations and charities that can help support patients for whom this is an issue. The following services provide a range of free and confidential support for people who have problems with their alcohol or drug use:

- **North Somerset** - [We are with you](#) - This website also includes a webchat option for those seeking general advice.
- **Bristol** – [Bristol ROADS](#) (Recovery Orientated Alcohol & Drugs Service)
 - [PostScript 360](#) - This Bristol based charitable organisation can provide support and information for individuals who taking drugs associated with dependence including benzodiazepines, z-drugs, tranquilisers, gabapentinoids and 'legal highs'.
- **South Gloucestershire** - [Developing Health & Independence \(DHI\)](#) DHI support adults aged 18 and over in South Gloucestershire around drugs and alcohol, including dependency with over-the-counter medication. As part of the PHM programme, DHI are providing specific support in Network 4 PCN to clients prescribed pregabalin/gabapentin to manage chronic pain. The DHI person centred model reflects the new NICE guidelines (April 2021) and provides a holistic and non-pharmacological approach to addressing chronic pain.

Other support

- Carers Support Centre - information, support, advice and groups for carers Tel: 0117 965 2200 or www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk or www.carersuk.org

Chronic Pain

- A short video (from the Defense & Veterans Center for Integrative Pain Management (DVCIPM)) may be useful for patients when discussing chronic pain '[Understanding pain & what to do about it in less than 5 minutes](#)'

Patient led websites

- **Pain Toolkit** -This pain tool-kit is a site run by Pete Moore. Pete experiences persistent pain himself. On his journey he has amassed many pain management techniques. He now uses his expertise to help other pain patients and health care professionals. <https://www.pain toolkit.org/>
- **Living Well With Pain** -This is a blog by Tina. "Through my lived experience of persistent pain, and my professional and volunteer experience working both with people with persistent pain and with healthcare professionals, I hope to help 'bridge the gap' between patients and healthcare professionals"
<http://livingwellpain.net/>
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy for chronic pain** - Professor Tamar Pincus explains acceptance and commitment therapy for chronic pain. 'It took me a long time to understand that acceptance was not the same as giving up or losing hope, but instead a conscious decision to completely engage with life, including pain' See short video 'Pain and Me' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUXPqphwp2U&t=2s>
- **How can you live well with chronic pain** - Dr Bronnie Thompson talks about ways to live well with pain.
<https://youtu.be/s8LNeq-IYfU>

For pain understanding and skills

- The **Retrain Pain Foundation** is an excellent resource with a number of quick, engaging materials around the topic of persistent pain. It has translated the material into a number of different languages.
<http://www.retrainpain.org/>
- **Live well with pain** is a website created through the collaboration of Dr Francis Cole (retired GP), Emma Davies (Advanced Pharmacist Practitioner) and Eve Jenner (Physiotherapist). It is written for clinicians and has helpful resources on a number of pain management strategies including opioid management.
<https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>
- **Pain-ed** is a website that is run by experienced clinicians working and researching in the pain management world. Their mission is to inform both the public and health care practitioners about the latest pain research and to dispel common myths about pain, providing a hope for change.
<http://www.pain-ed.com/>
- **The British Pain Society website**. Helpful information section for patients with pain conditions, and details of various support groups, including guidance supported by available evidence on clinical and other pain matters. www.britishpainsociety.org
- **The Pain Relief Foundation website** - Information leaflets on pain management can be downloaded or ordered from the website. www.painreliefoundation.org.uk
- **Pain concern** - provides support for those with pain and their carers and has factsheets and leaflets on different aspects of chronic pain and self-management. It also contains Airing Pain, a series of regular podcasts on living with pain, which can be downloaded for free. www.painconcern.org.uk
- **Flippin' Pain** is a public health campaign with a clear goal to change the way we think about, talk about and treat persistent pain. Website contains a number of useful resources including patient leaflets, videos, podcasts, Ted Talks, booklets for both patients and clinicians: flippinpain.co.uk
- **Pain Data** - this website provides general information relating to all aspects of pain management and includes a section for patients (resources, a guide to self-management (available in different languages) and clinic:
paindata.org

For specific pain conditions or body parts

Fibromyalgia

- Fibromyalgia support - A leaflet for people with fibromyalgia can be found at: <https://bnssg.icb.nhs.uk/library/leaflet-people-fibromyalgia/>
- VitaMinds run a 6 week [Fibromyalgia Webinar Course](#)

Back pain

- www.backcare.org.uk – specifically for people with lower back and general back pain. There is a forum and helpline available, as well as useful information on back pain and care.

A back pain fact sheet is also available via the Self-Care Forum <https://www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets/>

Pelvic pain

- www.pelvicpain.org.uk – the Pelvic Pain Support Network provides information, plus a message forum for members where they can find support and ask advice of other members of the public. Conditions covered include endometriosis, vulval pain, prostatitis, chronic pelvic pain syndrome, and interstitial cystitis.

Arthritis

- <https://www.versusarthritis.org/> –Versus arthritis website. Contains a very helpful section with information on various aspects of arthritis and related musculoskeletal conditions including fibromyalgia, as well as low back pain. It is also contains a local helpline and forum with trained workers. There is also information on local support groups.

Facial Pain

- <https://www.brainandspine.org.uk/our-publications/booklets/face-pain/> Download a booklet on facial pain and trigeminal neuralgia. This booklet provides information on the different types of face pain, common symptoms, tests and treatments.

Complex Regional Pain syndrome (CRPS)

- crps-uk.org - A patient led organisation for people with Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, their family and friends and anyone working within the healthcare system. They offer support, education, assist with research and raise awareness of CRPS

Headaches and Migraines

- <https://migrainetrust.org/> - a patient facing website that has information on managing migraines and support available.

Hip and knee pain

- [My Joint Health Hub - msk \(bnssg.nhs.uk\)](#) which includes information for a range of MSK conditions, including information about [ESCAPE-pain](#) courses and the 'get you better app' (you may need to register for this app).