

Chronic Pain Management

Pain is considered chronic if it lasts more than 3 months. If it's lasting that long, it likely won't go away without some form of healthcare intervention. There are several alternative treatments and approaches for managing chronic pain, many of which are covered by BC's Medical Services Plan (MSP) – meaning you won't have to pay out of pocket.

To receive support and advice for alternative pain management strategies you can:

- Ask your doctor to assess your pain and recommend treatment.
- If you don't have a doctor (or if you're unable to see your doctor, don't have a good relationship with them, or ask and don't find them helpful), contact PainBC's Pain Support Line at 1-844-880-7246. They can recommend practitioners to you.
- If you have benefits through your employer or union start using them. Trying lots of therapies can help you find what works for you. Many benefits plans cover therapies like massage, physiotherapists, acupuncture, and counselling - all of which can be helpful in managing chronic pain.

Some questions to ask your provider when discussing opioids are:

- How much pain relief should I expect from this medication?
- Are there alternatives to opioids I could take?
- How long should I take this medication?
- When will we have a follow-up appointment to discuss how I'm doing on this medication?

If you and your health-care provider move forward with an opioid prescription here are some ways to reduce the risks/harms associated with opioids:

- Continuous use of opioids (in particular longer than 2 weeks) can lead to physical dependence because your body gets used to having a regular supply of the drug. Therefore, use opioids for as short a period as possible. Make a plan with your health-care provider for when you're ready to stop the medication; stopping your meds abruptly can cause you to experience withdrawal symptoms.
- Use the lowest dose possible to control your pain.
- Never take more of your meds or take them more frequently than advised by your health-care provider.
- Keep your meds in a secure place so that no one else can use them.
- Return unused medications to a pharmacy to ensure they're disposed of safely.
- If you find yourself wanting to take your meds more frequently than advised or for any other reason other than physical pain management speak to your health-care provider right away.

Supporting Your Mental Health While You're Healing

Being injured takes a toll on our mental health. Your brain feels the effects of your body's pain, the healing process can be really frustrating, and being off work can strain you financially and socially.

Putting a plan in place early can help support your mental health throughout the process. Some suggestions:

- Ask a friend if they can come by and hang out on a regular basis. Being home alone and in pain isn't a fun experience.
- See if anyone can organize a meal train for you so you know you'll have something good to eat!
- Take up or return to a hobby that you can do from whichever position you need to be in for recovery (e.g. From bed, or the couch).

If you're really struggling you can also call the Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888, or if you're Indigenous the Kuu-us Crisis Line at 1-800-588-8717.

If you find yourself using drugs and alcohol more than usual, consider coming to Hammer Time, a construction industry specific support group, on Zoom Thursdays at 7pm.

Zoom Meeting ID: 845 2308 9259
Passcode: 379893

Some information in this pamphlet was sourced from Health Canada's "Talking to Your Provider about Opioids" Guide.

