Management of Chronic Pain in Patients above 16 years of age - The Overarching Guide for Primary Care Clinicians

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Patient centered assessment **2**
Talking about pain—how this affects life and how life affects pain 2
Providing advice and information 3
Developing a care and support plan 3
Chronic Pain (Primary and Secondary) **4**
The new classification of chronic pain as per NICE guideline [NG193] 4
Assessment of Chronic Pain – A quick guide 5
Neuropathic pain .....
Management of osteoarthritis in primary care **6**
Opioids in non-cancer pain .....
Opioid deprescribing for persistent non-cancer pain .....
Reporting controlled drugs incidents **8**
Useful read codes **8**
SystmOne readcodes 8
EMIS readcodes 8
Headaches in adults guideline .....
Cluster Headaches - Home Oxygen Pathway .....
Resources for clinicians **9**
Summary of NICE guidelines related to pain management **10**
Appendix 1 13
Authors 14

PATIENT CENTERED ASSESSMENT

People experiencing persisting pain have complex care needs that can be challenging to meet in primary care settings. Effective pain management for most people will require a collaborative approach where the person is informed, listened to and actively involved, to the extent that they wish, in decision making.

Clear, responsive, and compassionate communication between clinician and person is a strong determinant of levels of engagement and will typically have a strong influence on treatment outcomes. How something is said is just as important as the what is said, non -verbal communication, body language, tone of words and eye contact.

TALKING ABOUT PAIN–HOW THIS AFFECTS LIFE AND HOW LIFE AFFECTS PAIN

Develop an understanding of the person as an individual to identify factors contributing to pain and how the pain affects the person's life. Wherever possible, and only with permission, family members and/or others in caring roles should be invited to attend sessions on understanding pain and its emotional effects.

Hear the persons pain story. Ask them to describe how chronic pain affects their life and how their life may affect their chronic pain. Try and open conversation away from symptoms to explore what pain means to the individual and their family. Consider:

- Lifestyle and day-to-day activities, including work and sleep disturbance.
- Physical, psychological wellbeing and stressful life events.
- Social interaction and relationships.
- Difficulties with employment, housing, and income.

- Values, beliefs and behaviours, the persons view on living well.
- What makes pain worse.
- The skills they have for managing their pain.
- What helps when pain is difficult to control.

- Their understanding of the causes of their pain.
- Understanding of treatments and investigations so far.
- Their (and their family or carers) expectations of what might happen in the future in relation to their pain.
- Their understanding of the outcome of possible treatments.

PROVIDING ADVICE AND INFORMATION

Invest in forming a therapeutic alliance with the person. Work to the **'ask- provide- ask'** rule, ask permission before giving information, provide the information and ask what they made of the information as well as how that fits with their understanding of pain.

Give people time and space to process information. Ensure that factors such as physical or learning disabilities, sight, speech or hearing problems and difficulties with reading, understanding or speaking English are addressed so that the patient can participate as fully as possible in their care.

Where possible give a clear diagnosis and share an explanation of chronic pain with the person. Incorporate aspects of the person's pain story and their own ideas and beliefs into the explanation. Discuss the likelihood that symptoms will fluctuate over time and that they may have flare-ups and that a reason for the pain (or flare-up) may not be identified.

Share that there can be improvements in quality of life even if the pain remains unchanged and that it is possible to 'live well', despite the pain. Provide reassurance to people that acute pain can heal, and chronic pain can be managed.

DEVELOPING A CARE AND SUPPORT PLAN

Chronic pain is an interplay of physical, psychological, and behavioural factors. Discuss a care and support plan that considers factors in ALL these areas. Explore in the discussions:

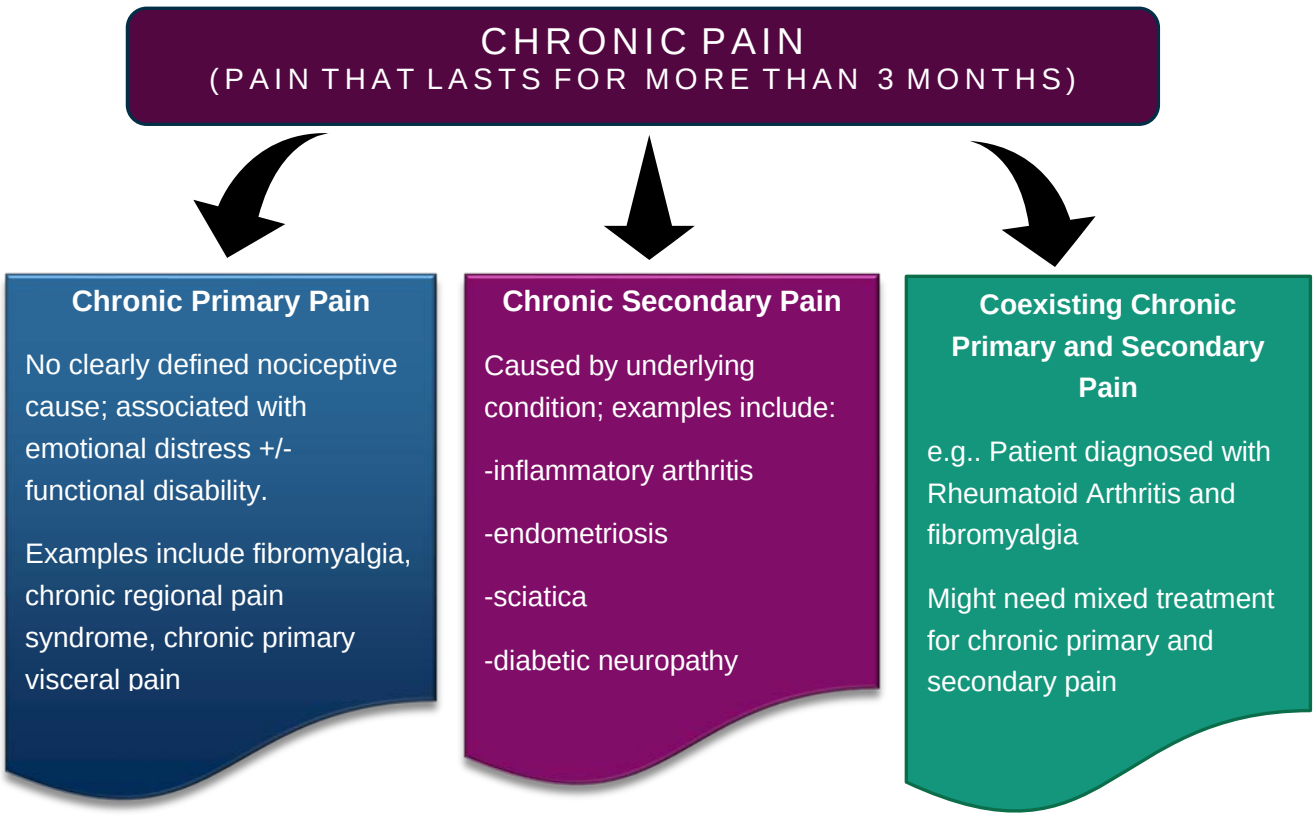
- The persons priorities, abilities, and goals and why these are important to them. How would life be different if they made these changes?
- What steps they have already taken to help them reach their goals and what possibilities for action do they see?
- Their preferred approach to treatment and balance of treatments for multiple conditions, recognising the challenges that this might bring as well as some thinking about how these challenges might be managed by them and with support of others / their care team.

Ensure support needed for young adults (16-25 years old) to continue with their education or training, if this is appropriate. This includes support needed with transitioning between services (paediatric to adult services) as well as any support needed by those with caring responsibilities.

When first developing the care plan and at all stages of care. Make sure the evidence for possible benefits, risks, and uncertainties of all management options have been explored and the person has enough information to make an informed choice. Please see local guidance on De-prescribing and STOMP or refer to the NICE guideline (NG197) if more information is required.

CHRONIC PAIN (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

THE NEW CLASSIFICATION OF CHRONIC PAIN AS PER NICE GUIDELINE [NG193]



CHRONIC PRIMARY PAIN

- Consider an antidepressant, either amitriptyline, citalopram, duloxetine, fluoxetine or sertraline for people aged 18 years and over to manage chronic primary pain, after a full discussion of the benefits and harms. The doses of SSRIs and SNRIs should be in line with BNF recommendations for depression. Explain that this is because these medicines may help with quality of life, pain, sleep, and psychological distress, even in the absence of a diagnosis of depression.

- Do NOT initiate any of the following to manage chronic primary pain: **Gabapentinoids, Opioids, Paracetamol, Antipsychotics, Benzodiazepines, Corticosteroid trigger point injections, ketamine or TENS machine.**

- If a person with chronic primary pain is already taking any of the above medicines review the prescribing as part of shared decision making:
  - explain the lack of evidence for these medicines for chronic primary pain **and**
  - agree a shared plan for continuing safely if they report benefit at a safe dose **or**
  - explain the risks of continuing if they report little benefit or significant harm and encourage and support them to reduce and stop the medicine if possible. Please see NICE guideline for prescribing and managing withdrawal from dependence forming medication and MHRA Drug Safety Update 2026: Improving information supplied with gabapentinoids (pregabalin/gabapentin), benzodiazepines, and Z-drugs.

Refer to specialist services if in doubt or diagnosis needs confirming.

ASSESSMENT OF CHRONIC PAIN – A QUICK GUIDE

Is the person being assessed experiencing chronic pain?

Yes

No → This guide does not apply.

Use biopsychosocial approach to assess impact on the patient's daily activities, sleep, work, emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social life.

Is there an underlying cause for the chronic pain?

Yes →

Chronic Secondary Pain

1. Use relevant local or NICE guidance to manage underlying condition e.g. Headaches in Adults, Lower Back Pain, Sciatica, Neuropathic Pain.
2. Assess if pain or its impact is disproportionate to the underlying condition. If yes, then consider adding options included in the management of chronic primary pain.

No ↓

Chronic Primary Pain

Management options include:

- Exercise programmes
- Psychological therapies (ACT, CBT)
- Antidepressants (off-license)
- Acupuncture (Currently not commissioned in Nottinghamshire ICS)

→

Do NOT initiate any of the following to manage chronic primary pain:

- Gabapentinoids
- Opioids
- Paracetamol
- Antipsychotics
- Benzodiazepines
- Corticosteroid trigger point injections
- Ketamine
- TENS machine.

Patients prescribed the above for Chronic Primary Pain should be reviewed and a shared management plan agreed based on risk versus benefit of taking these medicines. Opioid deprescribing for persistent non-cancer pain is a useful guideline if patient is willing to taper.

Clinicians should review their patients at least annually with aim to reduce pain killers even if patient is stable. Agree with patient how fast, how much and how to manage a "flare-up" during this period. Regular (two or four-weekly) reviews might be necessary in some cases. Clinician must ensure that patient has sufficient supply of their medications to avoid withdrawal symptoms. For more specific information please visit NICE guideline [NG215] on Medicines associated with dependence or withdrawal symptoms: safe prescribing and withdrawal management for adults.

MANAGEMENT OF OSTEOARTHRITIS IN PRIMARY CARE

Risk Factors in Osteoarthritis

Modifiable

- Obesity (accounts for 25% of OA cases)
- Muscle strength
- Injury
- Occupation
- Smoking

Non-modifiable

- Age > 40 years old
- Sex (Females more affected)
- Genetics

CORE MANAGEMENT

Patient Education

Exercise

Weight Loss

PHARMACOLOGICAL OPTIONS

if needed use alongside core management and use the lowest effective dose for the shortest time

Topical NSAIDs, Capsaicin cream 0.025%

Systemic side-effects sill possible with topical NSAIDs.

If ineffective/unsuitable

<u>Oral NSAIDs</u>

Ibuprofen, naproxen, Celecoxib, Nabumetone and Indometacin

NSAIDs – take account of potential GI, renal, liver & CV toxicity and any risk factors including age, pregnancy, current medication and comorbidities.

Offer gastro-protective treatment eg PPI. (See <u>APC gastroprotection with PPI guidance</u>)

<u>Paracetamol and weak opioids</u>

- should **<u>ONLY</u>** be used infrequently for short-term pain relief **<u>AND</u>** if all other pharmacological treatments are unsuitable, not tolerated, or ineffective.

ONLY consider intra-articular corticosteroid injections when other pharmacological treatments are ineffective or unsuitable, or to support therapeutic exercise.

- These injections only provide short-term relief (2 to 10 weeks).

Do not offer:

- Glucosamine – no strong evidence
- Strong opioids- risk outweigh benefits
- Paracetamol routinely unless as per <u>above</u>- no strong evidence of benefit
- Weak opioids unless as per <u>above</u>- associated with dependence and withdrawal symptoms
- Intra-articular hyaluronan injections and its derivatives- no evidence of benefit
- Chondroitin, and topical rubefacients

For more information see: <u>Nottinghamshire Area Prescribing Committee Formulary</u>

PATIENT EDUCATION

Excellent resources for patients and their families, including educational videos, are available on:

- Versus Arthritis **https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/conditions/osteoarthritis/**
- Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance **arma.uk.net**

The NHS information leaflet **Osteoarthritis**

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Advise your patients on muscle strengthening exercises, aerobic fitness training, and pacing of activities (balance of activities and rest, ideally integrating physical activity into the person's daily routine).atients aged 18 years old and above, who require guided exercise (e.g.. those with dementia or learning difficulties), are now able to access First Contact Physiotherapy Service offered as an alternative to seeing their GP for MSK conditions.

WEIGHT LOSS

- For patients within Nottinghamshire County Council Your Health Notts is commissioned to provide a variety of wellbeing services including weight management. Referrals can be made by professionals or patients can self-refer via telephone: 0115 772 2515 or website or email yourhealth.notts@nhs.net
- For patients within Nottingham City Council. Thriving Nottingham. is commissioned to provide a variety of wellbeing services including weight management. Referrals can be made by professionals or patients can self-refer via telephone: 01156 485724 or website or email:hello@thrivingnottingham.org.uk
- Weight-loss injections or bariatric surgery (Tier 4) may be an option for a **very limited cohort of patients** who meet **local eligibility criteria**; referral forms and further details are available on TeamNet.
- Further details of weight-loss services available within the ICB are set out in the ICB Overweight, Obesity and Weight-Loss Services Policy

Please refer to local MSK service if specific or more guide support is required.

Osteoarthritis can be diagnosed and managed clinically without an X-ray (NICE Osteoarthritis in over 16s : diagnosis and management; NG226); however imaging might be required if more invasive treatment options are considered. Further information, including Nottinghamshire MSK radiology guidelines are available on TeamNet.

NICE (NG 226) states that intra-articular steroid injections may be considered as adjunctive option to core non-pharmacological management when other pharmacological treatments are ineffective or unsuitable, or to support therapeutic exercise. Before considering injections assess if patient struggles with the symptoms below:

- They suffer from moderate to severe pain that is not being managed on analgesia.
- Night pain or pain at rest.
- Limitation of function due to poorly controlled pain

Intra-articular corticosteroid injections provide short-term symptom relief only (typically 2–10 weeks), with no evidence of long-term benefit beyond 3 months, and do not modify disease progression. There is increasing evidence of potential harm to joint cartilage with repeated injections, therefore repeated or long-term use is not advised. Injections should be used primarily for short-term management of symptom flares, where other treatments have been unsuccessful, and ideally alongside rehabilitation or a structured exercise programme. Where repeat injections are considered, they should be appropriately spaced (no sooner than 4 months apart and no more than three per year) and should not be given within 6 months of planned surgery due to infection risk.

Patients with known inflammatory pain but presenting symptoms of overlapping neuropathic pain might benefit from an addition of neuropathic pain agent. Please see our local guideline for more information.

REPORTING CONTROLLED DRUGS INCIDENTS

The CDAO of EastMidlands (Derbyshire, Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland, Linconshire, Northamptonshire, Nottingham &Nottinghamshire) is Samantha Travis. Please see contact details below.

Tel: 07714 777 667Generic Email: England.midlandscd@nhs.net

The Controlled Drugs Team has produced bespoke guidance in the form of newsletters for the Safe management of CDs in Care Homes and for Private CD Prescribers and Private Paramedics. Copies of the guidance can be found at www.cdreporting.co.uk .

USEFUL READ CODES

SYSTMONE READCODES

- Chronic pain – 1M52
- Chronic pain review – 66n
- Patient counselled – 6721
- Medication stopped ineffective – 8BI7
- Doctor stopped drug ineffective – 8B350
- Treatment not tolerated – 8I7
- Opioid drug dependence – E240z
- Non-dependent opioid abuse – E255z
- Poisoning by opioids – SyuFB

EMIS READCODES

- Opioid dependence
- Nondependent opioid abuse
- Non-opioid analgesic
- Harmful use of opioid

*SNOMED CT is a structured clinical vocabulary for use in an electronic health record. SNOMED codes are currently recommended to be used in in electronic care records and can be searched for on Primary Care Domain Reference Set Portal - NHS Digital .

RESOURCES FOR CLINICIANS

RESOURCE NAME	RESOURCE DESCRIPTION AND WEBSITE ADDRESS
NICE - Neuropathic pain in adults: pharmacological management in non-specialist settings (CG 173)	This guideline covers managing neuropathic pain (nerve pain) with pharmacological treatments (drugs) in adults in non-specialist settings. https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg173
APC local guidelines and the De-prescribing and STOMP guide	Resources including clinical information and handy leaflets for patients and clinicians. https://www.nottsapc.nhs.uk/guidelinesformularies/ https://www.nottsapc.nhs.uk/de-prescribingstomp/
British National Formulary Online	https://bnf.nice.org.uk/
Live Well with Pain	An online resource for GPs and pain specialists to help increase skills and confidence in working with people who live with persistent pain. https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/
Opioids Aware	A resource for patients and healthcare professionals to support prescribing of opioid medicines for pain. https://www.fpm.ac.uk/opioids-aware
MHRA Drug safety updates	https://www.gov.uk/drug-safety-update
Moving Medicine	A useful resource to help healthcare professionals integrate physical activity conversations into routine clinical care. https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/
Faculty of Pain Medicine - PILs	Patient information leaflets on medications and interventions commonly used to treat persistent pain https://fpm.ac.uk/patients/patient-info
Pain Toolkit	https://www.paintoolkit.org/
PICS Pain Service website	Information for prescribers and patients https://www.picspainservice.org.uk/
NHS How to get to sleep	Sleep restoration strategies https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/
Mind website	Explains sleep and mental health, gives practical suggestions and information about where to get support. https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/sleep-problems/about-sleep-and-mental-health/
Safer Opioid Management Leaflet	Opioid de-prescribing aid for clinicians (page 13)
Medicines Safety Improvement Programme	NHSEI workspace/resource centre on Future NHS Platform.
Understanding Pain in less than five minutes	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KrUL8tOaQs&t=3s