

## **Pain Management Teams**

A pain management team can be very important in helping guide you to the best outcome for you. A pain management team usually involves a number of health professionals and this varies depending on your pain condition and how complex it is.

Make sure you ask your health professional what help they can give you, so you can achieve the goals that are important to you.

## **Health Professionals: roles in your pain co-management**

**General practitioner (GP)** Your GP is often the key person coordinating your health team. It is important to try and establish good communication with your GP and plan your pain management together. Here are some of the important things your GP can help you with:

- Setting goals with you (work, recreational, exercise)
- Coordinating care with other health professionals in your pain team and making sure your management is well integrated
- Referring you to other health professionals who are important to your care
- Reassuring you regarding your management plans
- Encouraging you to stay moving and active
- Helping to sort out if pain medication or procedures are appropriate for you and how these fit into the 'whole' person approach
- Communicating with your employer and other health professionals

**Physiotherapist** Your physiotherapist can advise you on:

- How best to start moving and exercising safely and effectively with pain
- What exercise is best suited to you (ask about all 4 types of exercise and what specific components of these types you need)
- Planning your movement and exercise schedule
- Setting an achievable pacing schedule (little bits often will help you avoid pain flares and get back into life) with you
- Helping you plan what you can do at home/from home to save you time/expense
- Using manual treatments, and other evidence-based treatments which may be appropriate for your pain problem
- Monitoring your progress using scientific measures (known as 'outcome measures'), so you can see the benefits of your pain approach
- Communicating with your other health professionals, making sure your management is well integrated

**Dietitian** If you have had persistent pain and have not been moving and exercising, you may have increased your weight. Sometimes medications can increase your weight. Your dietitian can help assist you to:

- Develop a nutritional plan, that combined with your paced movement and exercise, will help you increase your activity and reduce your weight safely

**Clinical psychologist** Your clinical psychologist can play a critical part in your pain management by:

- Helping you to learn new ways of approaching pain
- Helping you better manage low mood, anxiety and distress
- Helping guide you towards more helpful coping approaches
- Helping you learn more positive ways of thinking about pain and guiding you about staying active in a positive way.
- Helping you to organize a better sleep pattern – better sleep usually means better pain control and more productivity (work, exercise and socialization); your clinical psychologist can also communicate with your other health professionals, making sure your management is well integrated
- Helping you to learn simple relaxation and meditation strategies that can manage pain and improve how you function

**Occupational Therapist** You may need to see an occupational therapist to discuss additional pain management options. Your occupational therapist can help you with:

- Setting and reaching your goals
- Practical tips to effectively restore your function
- Pacing activities - see our 'Pacing and Goal Setting' pain management module
- Finding practical ways of staying active at work or in your occupation
- Transitioning back to work
- Referring you to additional health professionals
- Liaising with your pain team

## Using a pain team

Pain teams are important in the management of your pain in the long term. Your pain team also has an important role in communicating with your other health professionals.

## Pain Specialist

You may need to see a pain medicine (doctor) specialist to discuss additional pain management options. Your pain specialist can help you with:

- Advice about pain medications (it is important to ask the specialist about the benefits and harms of medications and procedures – see our 'Medicines and Procedures' management module
- Encouraging you to stay active, using paced movement and exercise especially if you have new medications or a procedure
- Supporting you to use a cognitive-behavioural approach to your pain management
- Referring you to additional health professionals
- Guiding you about different or new treatments which may be of benefit
- Liaising with your pain team

## Other specialists and health professionals

You might need to seek help from other health professionals to better treat and manage your pain. There are many examples including: neurologists, neurosurgeons, rheumatologists, occupational therapists, and exercise physiologists. You should always ask your health professionals how they can help you to achieve your pain management goals.

**Table:** Below is an example of how you can list your pain management team and the pieces of the pain management jigsaw that you need to better manage your pain.

| Health Professional        | Role and what I need to help me co-manage my pain   |
|----------------------------|---|
| General practitioner       | Help me coordinate my pain team and integrate my pain treatments; check my progress; liaise with my employer            |
| Physiotherapist            | Movement and exercise plan (pacing and goals; reconditioning and flexibility; manual treatments is appropriate)         |
| Clinical psychologist      | Help me with ways to manage my low mood and sleep and my unhelpful responses to pain                                    |
| Dietitian                  | Help prepare a nutritional plan to reduce my weight   |
| Occupational therapist     | Discuss options for pacing activity, work and recreation and help to guide sensible, safe increases in these activities |
| Pain Specialist            | Discuss options for pain medications to help me stay active/doing my yoga/exercise and staying at work                  |
| Other health professionals | Massage therapist and yoga teacher for help with muscle tightness/ flexibility  |

You can use this example and create your own pain management team, outlining specific roles and goal