

Information about pain management services

Introduction

You have been referred to the pain management service at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. This leaflet aims to give you an overview of our service.

What can I expect from the pain management team?

Chronic pain is an individual experience and people react to living with it in different ways. People with chronic pain often have difficulties carrying out daily activities, including work and exercise. This can be very distressing and people can often feel low and anxious as a result. The pain management team aims to help you manage the challenges of living with chronic pain.

Who is in the pain management team?

Our multidisciplinary team is made up of several different professionals: doctors, nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and administrative staff. Some or all of them may be involved in your care.

Your first appointment

At your first outpatient appointment you will have a full assessment with a consultant from the pain management team. These appointments normally last 30 to 40 minutes and will look at the origin and development of your pain problem, any investigations and treatment carried out so far, and the levels of your pain. Assessment will also be made of the effect pain is having on your daily activities,

work, sleep, mood and emotional well being. It is important to tell the consultant about any medical conditions you have, as they could be contributing to your pain.

You need to bring your medication to the appointment, or a list of medication you are currently taking, along with any scans or letters from other hospitals that are relevant to your current pain. Some appointments will include a physical examination of the painful area and further investigations, such as scans, may be arranged before a treatment plan is discussed and agreed.

If you need an interpreter, please let the department know so this can be arranged.

A range of possible treatments are available and you may be offered one or more of these, depending on your condition.

Medication

There are a number of different medications which we might suggest you use, including common medicines, such as paracetamol or anti-inflammatory drugs. Some patients may be helped by medications that are normally used for other conditions such as depression or epilepsy, which reduce pain by changing the way the nervous system handles the pain message.

Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)

This is a small, patient controlled electrical device that delivers electrical impulses across the skin and can be an effective way to relieve chronic pain. It delivers a comfortable continuous tingling or gentle pulsating sensation. Full instruction on the use of TENS is given by trained staff.

Interventional procedures

Interventional procedures that might be recommended to you include:

- different types of injections (known as nerve blocks)
- epidurals (an injection of painkiller into your back)
- more complex procedures, which will be explained as needed.

For more information on these, please ask your consultant.

Non-interventional approaches

Psychology – This aims to improve how you cope with your pain and the various ways it may be affecting your life.

Physiotherapy – A specialist physiotherapist will normally assess you and develop an individual exercise plan.

Self management techniques

Pain management programme – This four week residential programme is for patients who continue to be in chronic pain. It helps patients learn physical and psychological coping mechanisms to improve their quality of their life.

It takes place on the St Thomas' Hospital site, and the assessment process for this will be separate to your pain management centre appointment.

Outcomes generally include a better quality of life with increased levels of fitness and physical function, less reliance on medication and aids, improvement in mood and relationships, and movement towards a patient's valued goals.

What happens after your initial appointment?

This will depend on your treatment plan.

If you have been booked for an intervention you will be contacted by our admissions team and offered a date to attend the day surgery unit for the procedure.

If you have been sent for investigations, or if you have been started on new drugs, you will receive a follow up appointment. This may be in the clinic or may be a telephone consultation with one of our specialist nurses.

Useful sources of information

Websites:

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/input

and

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/pain

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment plan please contact **020 7188 8877** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Notes

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Contact us

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC) – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.

t: 020 7188 3416

Language support services – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS Choices – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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