

## Clinical Psychology

Clinical psychology treatments are also vital in helping you return to normality. These treatments focus on ways to deal with and minimize the impact of chronic pain on other areas of your life. Common “knock on” effects of pain are mood changes, poor sleep, stress, conflict with employers or insurance companies, relationship difficulties and financial worries. Patients often feel a sense of things spiraling out of control. A clinical psychologist is there to work through these issues with you and give helpful strategies to work around or overcome them.

In addition, there are some specific psychological pain management strategies to learn. Cognitive behavioural therapy is a path to coping better with pain through changing thoughts and behaviours. (*Cognitive therapy* can offer better ways of coping with pain and *behavioural therapy* looks at changing the way you do things to better manage your pain.)

There are also helpful techniques that can be learned to improve sleep and relaxation.

## Finally...

Chronic pain is a disease that requires long-term management with input from a multidisciplinary team. Our team will recommend treatments targeted to your specific condition and a range of techniques to help you learn to take back control and manage your pain.



## I still have questions, what can I do?

If you still have any questions relating to your procedure you can contact the Northern Pain Centre through the phone number or email address below, or visit our website for more information.

### Our locations:

Level 4, North Shore Private Hospital  
Westbourne Street  
St Leonards NSW 2065

Level 1, Suite 107, Q Central Building  
10 Norbrik Drive  
Bella Vista NSW 2153

Dale Street Medical Specialists  
Unit 119/ 20 Dale Street  
Brookvale NSW 2100

Suite 2, Level 1, Element Building  
200 Central Coast Highway  
Erina NSW 2250

**T:** 02 9439 6456

**F:** 02 9460 9230

**E:** [admin@northernpaincentre.com.au](mailto:admin@northernpaincentre.com.au)

**W:** [www.northernpaincentre.com.au](http://www.northernpaincentre.com.au)

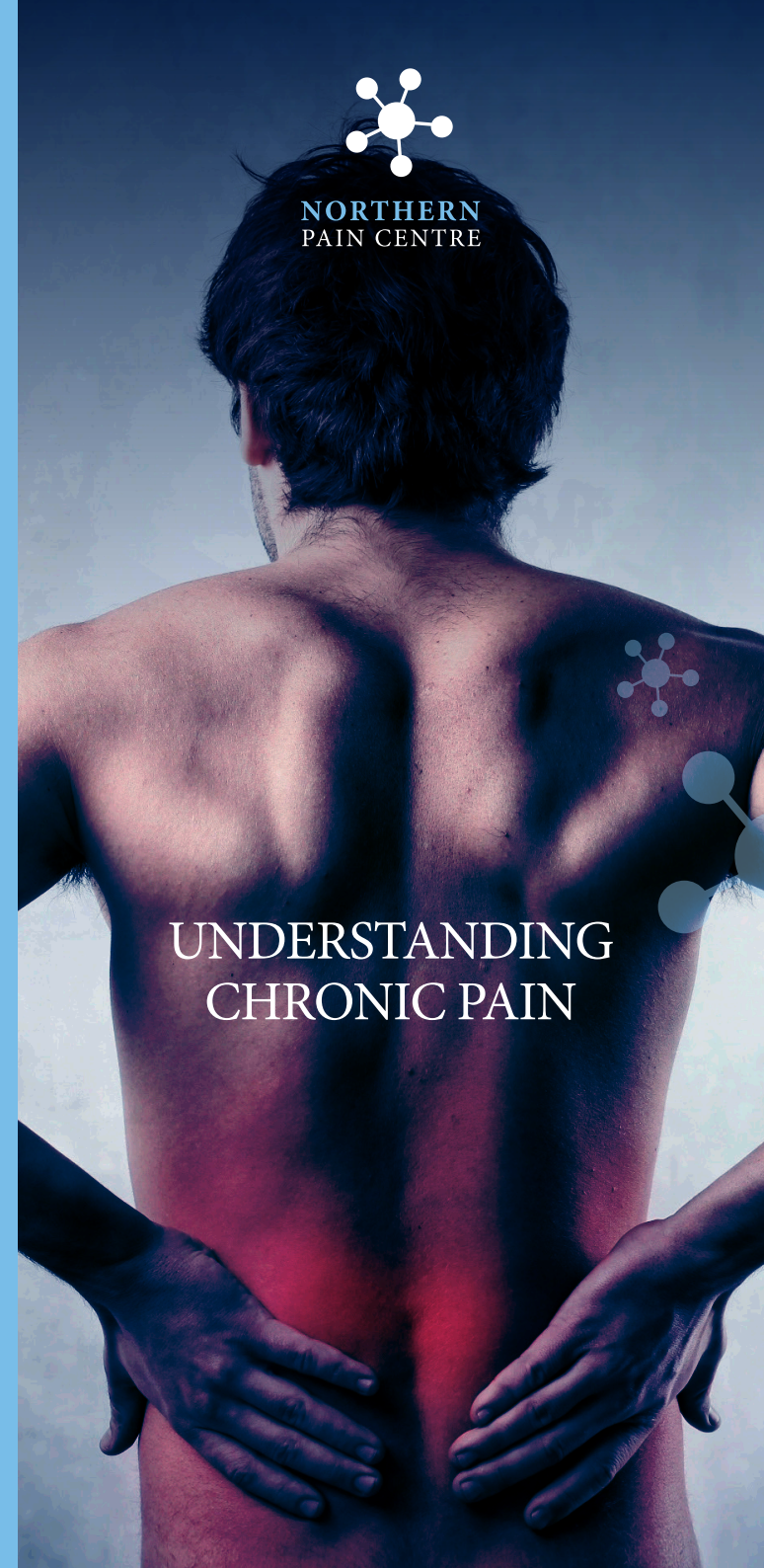
*This pamphlet is for general education only. Specific questions or concerns should always be directed to your doctor. Your doctor can explain the possible risks or side effects.*



**NORTHERN  
PAIN CENTRE**



**NORTHERN  
PAIN CENTRE**

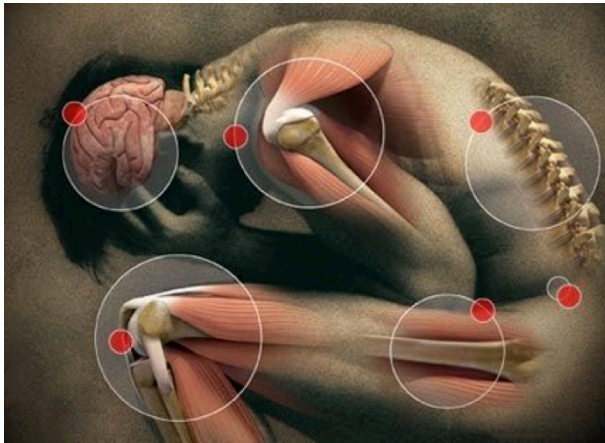


**UNDERSTANDING  
CHRONIC PAIN**

## What is Acute Pain?

Acute pain is short-term pain. It may last minutes, hours, days or weeks. It is a warning signal that something is injured or wrong with your body. It may signify an injury such as a fractured bone, or illness such as infection or cancer.

When an underlying cause of acute pain is identified and treated, it usually gets better.



## What is Chronic Pain?

Chronic pain is pain that persists longer than expected, beyond the usual time period of healing. Around one in five people experience chronic pain. It may start after an injury, surgery, or even spontaneously. There may or may not be an underlying, diagnosed disease that causes chronic pain, such as osteoarthritis. Chronic pain can remain long after scans have returned to normal. In contrast to acute pain, chronic pain is not a warning signal and is managed very differently.

By the time pain becomes chronic, you will have been investigated to either find an underlying cause, or to rule out a serious injury or disease. Many patients are concerned that there is ongoing damage, or that injuries have been missed. Appropriate examinations and tests should be done to rule this out. Once this process is complete, your doctor will be able to explain a little more about why you are continuing to experience pain.

Chronic pain can be viewed as a dysfunction of the nervous system. Over time, changes in the nervous system, especially the spinal cord and brain, lead to alterations in how things feel. This is called central sensitisation and can cause things that are not usually painful, such as bending, walking, touch or movement, to be experienced as pain. Mood, emotions and stress can heighten or exaggerate this sensitivity and worsen the experience of pain.

## How is Pain Treated?

Acute pain is often treated with an operation, rest, and strong pain relieving medication to be used during the healing process. For example, abdominal pain due to acute appendicitis is treated by an operation and will generally get better. Acute pain is a warning system that tells us to rest while the body heals itself. There are times, however, when even in acute pain it is important to keep moving and remain active (such as acute back pain).

Managing chronic pain is quite different. It is important to deal with the source of pain, as well as identify and treat other aspects of life that are affected by pain.

Medications can help, but it is important to balance the benefits against the risks of certain common pain relievers. For example, your body will quickly become dependent on strong opioid pain medication while the pain-relieving effects can reduce over time.

There may be targeted procedures that can relieve your symptoms (e.g. radiofrequency denervation of the facet joints). If these are appropriate for your condition they will be recommended by your doctor.

As chronic pain is not due to ongoing damage to the body's tissues, rest for healing purposes is not required. Too much rest can actually lead to physical deconditioning, making you weak and stiff.

## Multidisciplinary Therapy

There are also treatments that focus on getting people with chronic pain back to normal life. These treatments are directed by our Physiotherapists and Clinical Psychologists. Just like our doctors, these practitioners have devoted extra study and training to meet the specialised needs of patients with chronic pain. Although you may have seen a physiotherapist or clinical psychologist in the past, you may not necessarily have heard all the options for treatment of your chronic pain.

## Physiotherapy

Active physiotherapy aims to get you moving again, reduce fear of movement and harness the power of the mind-body connection. Sometimes long-term unhelpful habits need to be corrected. Supervised sessions help you steadily improve towards your activity goals, and gain the skills you will use to achieve your maximum potential.

Our physiotherapists specialise in managing chronic pain and will tailor an activity program to gradually build your strength and endurance. Although this can be challenging, it is essential in getting back to normal life.

