

Living with Chronic Pain

How to manage pain, improve your daily life, and work with your healthcare team.



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Your health plan and healthcare team know how chronic pain can wear you down. This workbook can help you manage your pain and keep it from getting in the way of your life.

You can read through the whole workbook, or you can start with the sections that interest you right now. This workbook can help you:

1 Understand your pain and how it affects your life.

2 Work with your healthcare team and case manager to find the best treatments for you.

3 Do things at home to help make your pain better.

What Is Chronic Pain?

Chronic pain is pain that will not go away. It can last for months or even years. It affects millions of people, and it is the most common reason for going to the doctor.

Chronic pain can start in many ways:

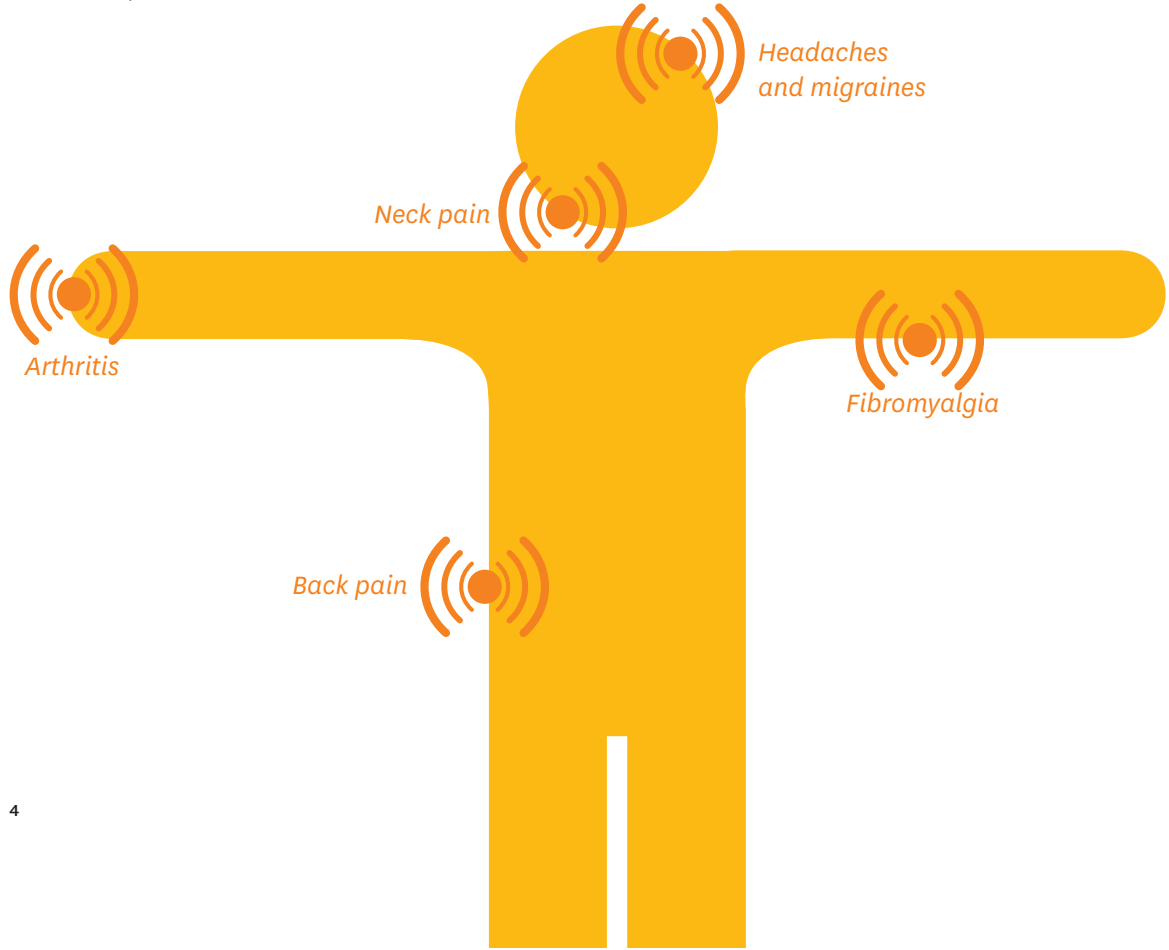
- » Sometimes the pain starts with an injury, an infection, or surgery, but then it does not go away after you heal.
- » Sometimes the pain comes with age or with a disease, such as diabetes, heart disease, shingles, or cancer.
- » Severe stress can also cause chronic pain.
- » Sometimes the cause of chronic pain cannot be found.

Each person's chronic pain is different:

- » The pain may be mild or severe.
- » It may hurt all the time, or it may come and go.
- » It may just be annoying, or it may keep you from living your normal life.
- » It may leave you depressed, angry, or afraid.

Common kinds of chronic pain:

- » Back pain
 - » Headaches and migraines
 - » Arthritis pain
 - » Neck pain
 - » Fibromyalgia
- Chronic pain varies a lot, but it is real and it changes your life.



Pain Is Usually a Warning Sign

Pain tells you that something is wrong, and that you need to act. That's why it is important to get treatment. The sooner you get treatment, the more likely that you will feel better.



Pain and your body

These things can make your pain better or worse:

- » The illness or injury that is causing your pain
- » Other illnesses and your general health
- » How well you sleep and how tired you are
- » The exercises and activities you do

Pain and your mind

These feelings and thoughts can make your pain worse:

- » Feeling depressed, angry, anxious, or helpless about your pain
- » Feeling guilty about being in pain
- » Avoiding your normal activities
- » Worrying about the cause of your pain

Pain and your daily life

These things can affect how you react to pain and how you care for yourself:

- » The demands of work and home life
- » How family and friends respond to your pain
- » How easy it is to get medical care
- » How much you have to pay for medical care



Breaking Your Pain Cycle

The goals of pain management

- » Feeling less pain or no pain
- » Having an increased sense of well-being
- » Returning to work or leisure activities

1 Learn about pain treatments.

Pain treatments can help you stop the pain cycle. This guide will tell you about treatments, such as:

- » Over-the-counter and prescription medicines.
- » Physical therapy, counseling, and relaxation.
- » Changes to your daily life, such as being active and doing things you enjoy.

2 Keep pain from taking over your life.

- » Ask for treatment early.
- » Accept help from family and friends.
- » Speak up. Ask for what you need.
- » Work with your healthcare team.

3 Keep a positive, hopeful attitude.

Doing the things listed below can help reduce your pain and improve your quality of life.


- » Accept that your pain is real.

- » Take one day at a time.
- » Follow your treatment plan.
- » Tell yourself that you will get through this.



The way to break the pain cycle is to get treatment and learn ways to help manage your pain.

My Goals:



Solutions to Dealing with Your Pain

Learn about your pain and how your daily life affects pain. This is important information for you to share with your healthcare team.

Talking about My Pain

Use this form to tell your healthcare team as much as you can about your pain.

Where do I feel pain?

When do I feel pain?

What is the pain like? (For example, sharp, throbbing, achy, shooting, dull, pinching)

How long have I had the pain?

What makes the pain worse?

What makes it better?

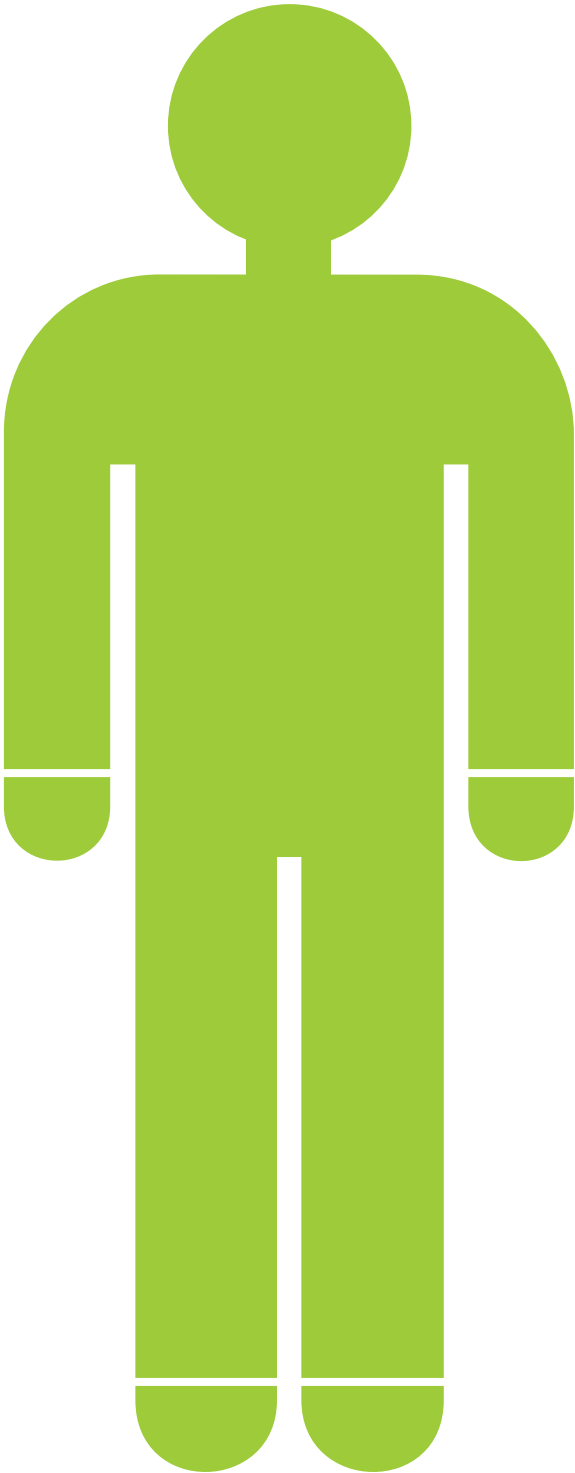
What has it kept me from doing?

What treatments have I tried?

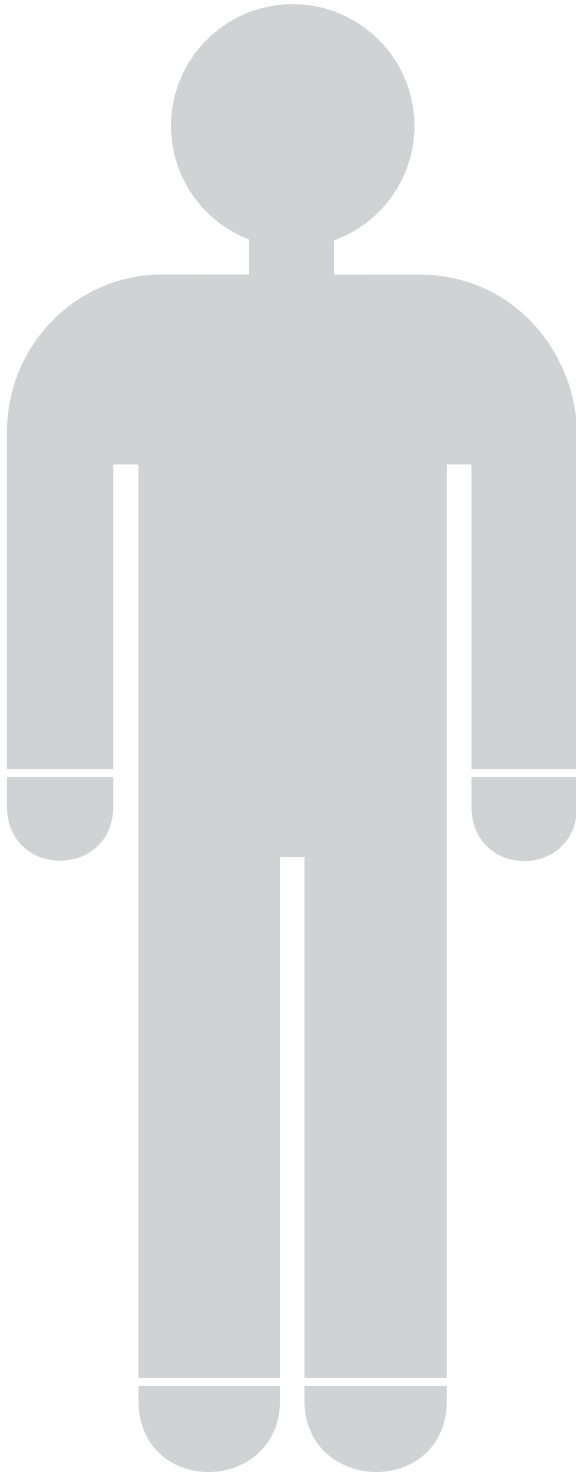
Questions and notes for my healthcare team:

Mark the pictures below to show where your pain is.

FRONT



BACK




My Pain and My Life

This form can help you see the things that affect your pain and how your pain affects your life. Check what best describes your pain and your life today.

Name: _____

Date: _____

MY PAIN



☐ None

☐ Annoying

☐ Uncomfortable

☐ Bad

☐ Very Bad

MY STRESS



☐ None


☐ Low

☐ Medium

☐ High

☐ Very High

MY SLEEP



☐ Very rested


☐ Rested

☐ Somewhat rested

☐ Little rest

☐ No rest

MY MOOD



☐ Very cheerful


☐ Somewhat cheerful

☐ Not cheerful but not depressed

☐ Somewhat depressed

☐ Very depressed

MY LEVEL OF ACTIVITY



☐ High


☐ Medium-high

☐ Medium

☐ Low

☐ None

MY SOCIAL TIME



☐ A lot

☐ Plenty

☐ Some, but not enough

☐ Little

☐ None

MY DAILY EXERCISE



☐ Over 1 hour


☐ 1 hour

☐ 1/2 hour

☐ 15 minutes

☐ None

MY APPETITE



☐ Excellent


☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

☐ Don't want food

MY DRINKING



☐ I don't drink


☐ 1 to 2 drinks a week

☐ 1 to 2 drinks a day

☐ 3 to 4 drinks a day

☐ More than 4 drinks a day

MY SEXUAL ACTIVITY



☐ Very satisfied


☐ Mostly satisfied

☐ Somewhat satisfied

☐ Not satisfied

☐ Very unsatisfied

MY CONCERNS ABOUT MONEY



☐ None


☐ Not very concerned

☐ Somewhat concerned

☐ Concerned

☐ Very concerned

MY CONCERNS ABOUT MY PAIN



☐ I don't worry at all because I know it will go away

☐ I worry a little

☐ I worry some

☐ I'm afraid I may always have pain

☐ I'm very afraid that I will always be in pain

MY LIFE ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5



☐ 5 Very good

☐ 4 Good

☐ 3 OK

☐ 2 Not very good

☐ 1 Poor



Working with Your Healthcare Team

You now know your pain symptoms and activities that affect this pain. You should work with your healthcare team to find treatment options.

Working with Your Healthcare Team



Your healthcare team includes all the people who help you manage your pain:

- » Your primary care doctor
- » Specialists, such as a neurologist or a psychologist
- » Nurses
- » A psychologist or mental health counselor
- » A physical therapist or rehabilitation specialist

Use the form on page 17 to keep track of your team.

Your treatment plan

A treatment plan may include medicine, physical therapy, counseling, and other steps to help you manage and reduce

your pain. You will work closely with your healthcare team to decide what's in your plan.

To make a treatment plan that works for you, your healthcare team needs to know everything you can tell them about you, your pain, and your life.

The tools on the next pages can help you and your healthcare providers understand your pain and create a good treatment plan for you.

Your rights as a patient with pain

Your doctors and other healthcare providers should:

- » Take your pain seriously, study it carefully, and treat it right away.

» Treat you with respect and give you clear answers to all your questions.

» Include you in making decisions about your care.

» Explain all your possible treatments, including the benefits, risks, and side effects of each treatment.

» Tell you what your insurance will pay for and what you will have to pay.

» Review your pain, and change your treatment plan if your pain does not get better.

» Refer you to a pain specialist if your pain does not get better.

List the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of everyone on your healthcare team.

My Healthcare Team

Primary care doctor:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Case manager:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Physical therapist:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Counselor:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Pharmacy:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Other healthcare provider:

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Notes:

Pain Medicines

Pain medicines can help you feel better and be more active. Some medicines are over-the-counter and some need a doctor’s prescription. You can get most medicines as both brand names and generics. Generics usually cost less. Generic names are listed below in italics and brand names are listed in parentheses.



Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Acetaminophen helps with pain, but it does not reduce the swelling that often comes with pain.

- » You can buy it without a doctor’s prescription.
- » It should not be taken with certain other medicines, such as the heart drug *warfarin* (Coumadin).
- » However, it can be taken with some stronger drugs, such as opioids.

NSAIDs—*ibuprofen* and *naproxen* (Advil, Motrin, Aleve)

NSAIDs ease pain and swelling (inflammation). They work better for some people than *acetaminophen*.

- » NSAIDs are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs.
- » You can buy them without a prescription. You can get higher strengths by prescription. One kind, *celecoxib* (Celebrex) comes only by prescription.

- » They can be taken with some stronger drugs, such as opioids.
- » You should take the lowest dose that relieves your pain.
- » NSAIDs can cause stomach bleeding, and they can damage the kidneys. They can also interfere with some medicines, including diuretics (water pills), ACE inhibitors, and ARBs.

Opioids

Opioids are strong prescription pain medicines. They work well to reduce pain. People may respond to one opioid better than another.

- » Opioid pain medicines include *oxycodone* (OxyContin and Percocet), *hydrocodone* (Vicodin), and *morphine* (MS Contin and Avinza).
- » Side effects from opioids include constipation, dizziness, sleepiness, sweating, nausea or vomiting,

swelling of the tongue or face, and trouble breathing.

- » You can become physically dependent on opioids. You must go off them slowly.

Other prescription medicines

Sometimes doctors prescribe other kinds of medicines to help control pain.

These include antidepressants, muscle relaxants, and sedatives.

Talk with your doctor about the best pain medicines for you

- » Ask how much to take and how often to take it.
- » Ask about the side effects.
- » Tell your doctor all the other medicines you take, including vitamins and herbs. Pain medicines can interfere with some other medicines.



Questions and notes for my healthcare team:

Other Treatments for Pain

Pain medicine is usually part of the treatment plan for chronic pain. But pain medicine often works best when used with other treatments. These treatments may help your body feel better or help you ignore the pain. Your healthcare team may suggest one or more of the treatments listed below.

Physical therapy

Physical therapy can help reduce pain and swelling and increase strength and range of movement. It can relieve chronic pain caused by back and joint problems, headaches, arthritis, fibromyalgia, and nerve damage.

Physical therapy usually includes strength and flexibility exercises. It can also include massage, ice, heat, or ultrasound.

If chronic pain makes it hard for you to move and do daily tasks, ask your healthcare team about physical therapy. Physical therapists must be licensed by the state.

Counseling

Counseling can help you keep pain from taking over your life. It can help you relax and sleep better. It can help you stop smoking, drinking, and overeating in response to pain. And it can help you manage feelings like anger or depression.

Talk to your doctor or your case manager if you want a referral to a counselor.

Relaxation

Relaxation therapy includes activities like meditation, deep breathing, and muscle relaxation. These activities can help slow down the body and calm the mind. They can lower your blood pressure, slow your heart rate and breathing, and reduce muscle tension. This can help relieve chronic pain.

Check with your health plan to find out what relaxation therapy is covered.

Chiropractic care

Chiropractors use massage, pressure, and physical

adjustment to straighten the bones and joints in the spine. This can help relieve pain and make movement easier. It can be especially helpful for relieving chronic back and neck pain, joint problems, and headache pain.

Check with your health plan to find out if chiropractic care is covered.

Acupuncture

This technique involves pricking the skin with very thin needles to treat physical, mental, and/or emotional issues. This practice is done around the world.

Questions and notes for my healthcare team:

Questions about Treatments

This workbook has information on medicines and other treatments. Your healthcare team will suggest treatments, but you should also tell them what you want. Make sure you understand all your treatment options. Ask the questions below about each treatment.

Questions to ask your healthcare team:

How can this treatment help me?

What are the benefits?

What are the risks and side effects?

What does the treatment cost?

Does my insurance pay for it?

How long will it take to work?

What should I do if it does not work?

My other questions:



Other Treatments for Chronic Pain

Many everyday activities can help you deal with your chronic pain. Talk to your healthcare team about the ideas on the following pages.

Things You Can Do to Help Yourself

Pain medicine is usually part of the treatment plan for chronic pain. But pain medicine often works best when used with other treatments. These treatments may help your body feel better or help you ignore the pain. Your healthcare team may suggest one or more of the treatments listed below.



1 Exercise in your everyday life

Many people are afraid that being physically active will make their pain worse. In fact, exercise is one of the best treatments for chronic pain. In most cases, an exercise program should be part of your treatment plan.

- » Exercise releases a natural chemical in the brain that lifts your mood and helps block pain signals.
- » Exercise also strengthens your muscles, and this helps prevent future injuries.

- » You may do one-on-one work with a therapist or trainer, a class, a group activity, or something on your own.
- » Walking is one of the best exercises. It doesn't cost anything, and you can do it almost anywhere.

Check with your healthcare team before starting an exercise program to see if it is the best one for you and your pain.

2 Reduce stress to relieve your pain

Stress can make your body more sensitive to pain. Finding ways to reduce stress can

help relieve chronic pain. Try listening to calming music, reading, or meditating. Or download a relaxation or guided imagery program that leads you through relaxation exercises.

3 Avoid alcohol while on medication

Alcohol can change the way many pain medicines work. For example, drinking alcohol while taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) can damage your liver. Taking alcohol with NSAIDs can increase the risk of stomach bleeding and sleep problems.

Talk with your healthcare team about how much alcohol you drink and ways to cut back, if needed.

4 Stop smoking to improve health

It is easier to manage pain if you stop smoking. Smoking can increase inflammation—pain, redness, heat, and swelling. This makes chronic pain worse.

Smoking damages your blood vessels, so less blood circulates

in your body. This can lead to heart disease and stroke. And it slows healing after an injury or surgery.

There are programs and medicines to help you stop smoking (like the patch). Talk to your doctor or your case manager for help.

5 Plan fun activities for mental relief

Sometimes you just need to get your mind off your pain. Try to do something you enjoy so that you don't focus so much on your pain. Try different activities, such as cooking, reading, watching movies, meeting friends for a meal, gardening, working in the garage, playing cards, and knitting.

6 Get support from other patients

Getting support is a big part of feeling better physically and mentally. You can join a support group with others who have chronic pain. They know what you feel, and they may have good ideas for managing pain.






Family and friends can also give you support by helping you and keeping you company.



Things I would like to do to feel better:

My Daily Pain Diary

A daily pain diary can help you and your healthcare team figure out how well your treatment plan is working and what changes you may need to make.

 Day & Time	 Where pain was	 Pain level (0-10)	 Kind of pain	 What I was doing
Example: Mon. 1 PM	lower back	8	sharp	washing dishes

 Medicine & dose	 When I took medicine	 Other treatments (heat, ice, exercise, etc.)	 How long pain lasted	 What made it better
Tylenol, 20 mg	1:15 PM	Stretching, heat	4 hrs.	heat (warm bath)

My Daily Summary

You can use this daily summary to track your treatment and any breakthrough pain you had between taking pain medicines.

Breakthrough pain is pain that happens even when you take pain medicine. The pain may happen when you do certain things, like cough. It may mean that you need to change your treatment plan.

Date:

Did I take all my pain medicine as directed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not, what did I skip and why?

Did I have breakthrough pain? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How many times? ☐ 1-3 ☐ 4-5 ☐ 6-8 ☐ 9-10 ☐ >10

What else did I try to ease the pain?
(such as medicine, rest, walking, heat, or physical therapy)

Did I exercise today? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What exercise? For how long?

How often did I wake up during the night and have trouble getting back to sleep?

How many hours did I sleep?

Where to Find More Help

You’re on Your Way!

Congratulations! You have taken big steps to help manage your chronic pain. To keep feeling better:

- » Take your pain medicines as directed.
- » Follow your other treatments as directed.
- » Tell your healthcare team if your pain changes or if it does not change.
- » Report any side effects from your medicines.

You may have setbacks along the way, like breakthrough pain or depression. But working with your healthcare team and keeping up with your treatment plan will help you get through the setbacks.

Where to Find More Help

These groups can help you find more information and useful tools.

- » Pain associations (ACPA)
- » Online pain diaries
- » Pain diary phone apps

Suggested Resources

The American Chronic Pain Association

<http://theacpa.org>
1-800-533-3231
Email: ACPA@theacpa.org

ACPA Resource Guide to Chronic Pain Medication & Treatment: 2014 Edition
<http://www.theacpa.org/Consumer-Guide>

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

a. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration
<http://www.fda.gov/default.htm>

b. A Guide to Safe Use of Pain Medicine. <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm095742.pdf>

c. A variety of drug safety information. <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/default.htm>

d. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research
Educational materials on topics related to buying and using medicine safely. <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm296593.htm>

e. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Over-the-Counter Medicines: What’s Right for You? <http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/UnderstandingOver-the-CounterMedicines/Choosingtherightover-the-countermedicineOTCs/UCM150312.pdf>

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM). (2010). What is CAM? <http://www.nccam.nih.gov/health/whatiscam>

NIH
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/chronicpain.html>

http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/chronic_pain/chronic_pain.htm

<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/Mar2012/Feature1>

Notes

[illegible]

Working with your healthcare team to manage chronic pain.

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