

Where would you like to be in the cycle?

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How do you think you can get there?

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More information

Contact our physiotherapy service on
Tel: 020 7288 5660

Further advice can be found on our
website: www.whittington.nhs.uk/msk

Acute pain

A patient's guide

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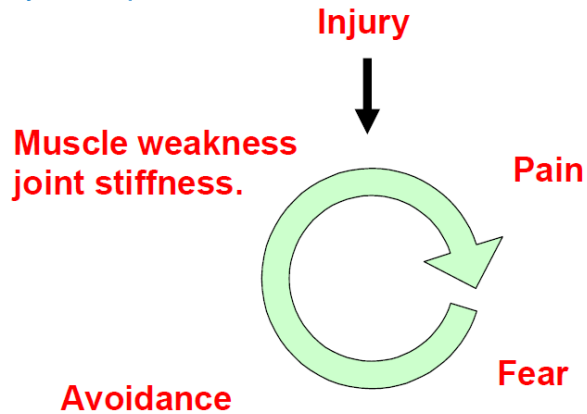


What is pain?

Acute pain, also known as short-term pain, is pain that has started recently. Many acute pains are our bodies' way of letting us know that something is wrong. They are really normally related to injury, for example disease or tissue damage.

Painful experiences involve many thoughts, beliefs and emotions. The amount of pain that a person feels does not necessarily relate to the amount of tissue damage. The brain can control the pain depending on how and where the injury happened.

Cycle of pain



When you are injured, the pain can cause you to be fearful of movement and make you avoid certain movements or daily activities.

Instead of helping the body to heal and improve, this weakens muscles around the joint leading the joint to become weak and very sensitive to pain.

The joint is now stiff, weak and sensitive to pain, which causes normal movements and activities to become painful.

If you can break this cycle of avoidance and fear about pain, by education, exercise and changes in lifestyle, then you can improve movement and muscle strength. The sensitivity of the injured area will decrease and this can allow you to return to normal activities.

The cycle of pain can continue for a long time and can be hard to break. The longer it continues the more fearful of pain and movement you become.

Pain does not always reduce quickly just because a joint starts moving or a muscle starts working.

Breaking this cycle means you must make a conscious effort to change aspects of your lifestyle and activity levels. You must try to do things you previously avoided.

If you don't change your lifestyle, you will be stuck in the cycle of pain until you do.

Consider these questions:

Do you now understand pain?

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If yes, where do you feel you are in the cycle?

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