

Evaluation and Management of Persistent Pain

The first step to managing your pain is to have your doctor do an evaluation. This evaluation gives your doctor the information he or she needs to guide your treatment.

Complete History Your doctor will ask you for a complete history of the pain you have and the treatments you have tried. This history includes questions about:

- Where your pain is
- How bad it is
- What it feels like
- What makes it better and worse
- How the pain affects your life

Daily Pain Diary Your doctor will ask you to keep a Daily Pain Diary. This is another important source of information about your pain. The diary helps you keep track of how much pain you have at different times of the day and how the medicines you take now are helping.

You should try to fill the diary out as completely as you can. If your pain is different from day to day, you will want to keep the diary for more than 1 day.

Physical Examination

Your doctor will perform a complete physical examination on your muscles, bones, joints, and nervous system. This exam can help identify the source of your pain, as well as any disease that might cause pain or that are affected by pain treatment.

Medical Tests

Your doctor may recommend some tests to help find the cause of your pain.

X-rays will evaluate your bones and joints. Computerized tomography, or CT scan, and magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI, both take 3-dimensional pictures of the inside of your body and can help find the cause of some types of pain.

Electromyography and nerve conduction tests examine how muscles and nerves work. They are used when your doctor thinks you may have nerve or muscle disease. These tests help find treatments that can relieve the pain caused by a disease.

As a result of these tests, you may be referred to specialists for help with particular painful conditions.

Your Role in Managing Pain

After you start your pain treatments, you need to tell your doctor what works and what does not. The Pain Diary can help you and your doctor monitor your progress. You may be asked to keep this diary before each visit to your doctor.

Take an active role in monitoring your pain and deciding what treatment works for you.