

BIOMEDICAL

Hunter Integrated Pain Service



KEY MESSAGES

1. Your pain is not explained by what is shown on a scan
2. Persisting pain is more about an over-protective or inflamed pain system
3. Harmful underlying problems, like cancer or a broken bone, need to be ruled out
4. Then begin treatment with the aim of settling your pain system
5. Medications and other medical treatments become less effective the longer pain lasts
6. The usual approach to pain medication involves slow reduction
7. You and your GP play key roles in developing a medication reduction plan

What causes pain?

- The pain system helps your brain to process danger and safety messages from bodily structures and the environment
- If there are too many danger messages your pain system can become sensitised or over-protective
- Over time pain can increase and even persist after an injury heals
- A scan of your body structures does not show how much pain you experience
- Sometimes opioid medication (like morphine) can worsen pain by making your pain system even more over-protective or sensitised



The science

- Medications, including opioids, can help short term pain
- Opioids are not effective for chronic pain. In some cases, opioids can even lead to worsening pain
- There are many possible side effects from opioids including constipation, low sex drive, drowsiness, addiction, accidental overdose and death
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may have a role in the treatment of ongoing active inflammation e.g. rheumatoid arthritis
- Anti-depressants and anticonvulsants may have a time limited role in treatment of nerve injury (neuropathic) pain
- Nerve blocks can help with acute and cancer pain
- Surgery is not helpful for most types of chronic pain. Joint replacement in well selected patients is an exception
- Treatments that are 'done for you' (passive treatments) are less effective for chronic pain than what you 'do yourself' (active treatments)
- Active treatments address thought patterns, emotional processing, relationships, activity, sleep and nutrition

Why?

Over time the body can become tolerant to medications. Also, being on a roundabout of medical treatments may distract you from exploring difficult thoughts, emotions, relationships and activities

How?

The usual approach to chronic non cancer pain involves a gradual switch from biomedical to active treatments. This focuses on mindbody, connection, activity and nutrition

OTHER LINKS

- **Brainman stops his opioids:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M11myFQPdCE>

- **Brainman chooses**

