

## Frequently asked questions

- 1. I have pain related to a medical condition (e.g. inflammatory bowel disease, multiple sclerosis, osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis). Does the Understanding Pain information apply to me?**

Yes. The same principles apply for pain related to medical conditions and injuries.
- 2. What do my scans/tests have to do with my pain?**

Scans and investigations show structural changes but they can't show pain. Your doctor may have ordered scans to look for a structural reason for your pain experience (e.g. a broken bone, nerve injury or cancer). Some structural problems can be treated. However, something seen on a scan is not always the reason for experiencing pain. Once you rule out a harmful structural problem, strategies aimed at expanding life function are more effective.
- 3. Will I get injections at HIPS?**

Probably not. Injections are not done often as there is limited scientific evidence of benefit in treating chronic pain.
- 4. Why does my medication need to be weaned?**

Short-term use of medication is okay for acute pain, however pain medications do not work well in the long-term. As you develop more active ways to expand life, you can wean off pain medication. This can be done at a rate that works for you.
- 5. Why do pain medications work less and less?**

Over time, your body gets used to pain medications like opioids. This is called tolerance. You then need more to get the same effect. This leads to other side effects and sometimes addiction. Scientific studies also show that opioids can at times actually increase your pain experience.
- 6. I have tried physiotherapy, pain medication and acupuncture before and nothing works. Is it worth coming to HIPS?**

Yes. Both you and your health care team need to shift away from less effective medical treatments aimed at shrinking pain and towards building skills that lead to a better quality of life.
- 7. Is cannabis effective for chronic pain?**

No. There are other more useful ways to manage pain. It is not safe to use cannabis for chronic pain. The problems outweigh the benefits. Long-term cannabis use can cause serious brain damage.
- 8. Does stress affect pain?**

Yes, stress and emotions do affect pain. Both pain and stress are emotional experiences. Psychologists are a key part of HIPS team.
- 9. Does this mean I am imagining my pain?**

No. Pain is real. Even though the brain produces pain this does not mean you are making it up. Many factors wind the nervous system up and down. This leads a person to experience more or less pain.