

# HELPING PATIENTS LIVE WITH NEUROPATHIC PAIN

Medicines are only partially effective in managing neuropathic pain. Using a whole-person approach, including addressing lifestyle factors, can help address patient perception of pain, improve coping and restore daily function.<sup>1</sup> Promoting pain acceptance, adopting realistic expectations for good pain management and integrating coping strategies as part of a management plan is important in helping patients live with their pain.<sup>2,3</sup> This action plan aims to support discussions.

## Treat the whole patient



### **Assess neuropathic pain**

Assess the patient's pain using a validated assessment tool such as the DN4. Acknowledge the impact the pain has on their life. Discuss neuropathic pain diagnosis. Additional information, resources and tools are available at [nps.org.au](https://nps.org.au).



### **Shared decision-making**

Actively involve patients in decision-making about the treatment and management of their condition.



### **Prescribe medicines**

Medicine choice should be based on patient history and comorbidities and should be in accordance with current therapeutic guidelines. The most common neuropathic pain medicines are TCAs and SNRIs and gabapentinoids.<sup>3</sup>



### **Develop management plan**

An individualised management plan should include realistic goals for improved function and pain relief.<sup>2-5</sup> Refer patients to pain specialists and allied health professionals to help manage neuropathic pain.



### **Promote coping strategies**

Coping strategies can help patients live with their pain and minimise mood and sleep disturbance.<sup>3</sup> Try:

- ▶ psychological interventions such as cognitive-behavioural therapy<sup>6</sup> and relaxation therapy<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ physical therapies such as exercise,<sup>8</sup> transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation<sup>9</sup> or acupuncture<sup>10\*</sup>
- ▶ pain acceptance<sup>11</sup> and realistic goal setting.



### **Monitor and review regularly**

Help manage expectations by setting realistic goals and regularly reviewing pain management plans. This may be required more frequently during the initial stages.



# LIVING WITH NERVE PAIN

Nerve pain is often difficult to treat, and medicines are just one aspect to managing this condition. Other strategies involve social, psychological and physical support. The benefit of these coping strategies cannot be underestimated. They can have lasting effects on emotional and physical wellbeing.

## Choosing what works for you

You may need to try a few different strategies to find which work best to lessen the effect pain has on your daily activities, mood or sleep.

Work with your health professional to set realistic goals for managing your pain, and review these regularly. Your goals can be short-term or long-term and will probably change over time.



### *My Goals:*

### *Steps to get me there:*

- Pace your physical therapies around your daily activities
- Stay active to maintain emotional and physical wellbeing
- Identify the triggers that impact your pain
- Try cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT)
- Accept the effect nerve pain has on certain activities
- Recognise the importance of routinely taking your medicine
- Engage family and friends to help you manage your nerve pain
- Join a pain support group

### *Other:*

### *Date to review my plan:*

### *For more information*

Australian Pain Management Association  
[www.painmanagement.org.au/](http://www.painmanagement.org.au/)

NSW ACI Pain Management Network  
[www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain)

NPS MedicineWise  
[www.nps.org.au/nerve-pain](http://www.nps.org.au/nerve-pain)

NPS MedicineWise is conducting a study to learn about how this tool helps people with nerve pain.

We invite you to take part in a 20 minute telephone interview, and you will be given an incentive for your time. To participate please email [evaluation@nps.org.au](mailto:evaluation@nps.org.au) or call **02 8217 8700**.