

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.¹ Promoting pain acceptance, adopting realistic expectations for good pain management and integrating active strategies as part of a management plan is important in helping patients live with their pain.^{2,3} This action plan aims to support discussions.

Treat the whole patient



Assess neuropathic pain

Take a targeted history and perform a physical examination, including sensory testing, as part of a comprehensive assessment of the patient's pain.^{3,4} Consider using a validated assessment tool such as DN4.^{3,5} Additional information, resources and tools are available at nps.org.au.



Provide education

Educate patients, families and carers about neuropathic pain.³ Discuss pain management strategies and direct patients to trusted sources of information. Acknowledge the impact pain has on the patient's life.



Develop management plan

Develop a multidimensional management plan in collaboration with the patient, considering the potential benefits and harms of interventions and how these will be measured.³ Establish realistic goals for improved function and pain relief with the patient.^{2,3} Tailor interventions to target multiple factors that contribute to the individual's pain experience.³



Promote active management strategies

Prioritise use of active strategies for self-management eg, social and physical activities, psychological interventions, improving nutrition and sleep.³ Consider referral to pain specialists and allied health professionals to support a multidimensional approach. Try:

- ▶ psychological techniques such as active listening, expectation management, motivational interviewing and relaxation.³
- ▶ activities and groups that increase social connections and physical activity.³
- ▶ formal psychological interventions, such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), that challenge unhelpful responses to pain.^{3,6}



Consider medicines

The decision to use a medicine and medicine choice should be based on patient history, comorbidities and engagement with other management strategies, and should be in accordance with current guidelines. Discuss the limited benefits of medicines and potential adverse effects with the patient. Agree upfront when and how a medicine will be stopped.³ The most common neuropathic pain medicines are TCAs, SNRIs and gabapentinoids.³



Monitor and review regularly

Regularly review the patient's management plan and goals to monitor progress, function and quality of life.³ 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. The benefits of social, psychological and physical strategies cannot be underestimated. They can address factors that contribute to pain and 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

Australia Pain Management Australia
www.painmanagement.org.au/
 NSW ACI Pain Management Network
www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain
 NPS MedicineWise
www.nps.org.au/nerve-pain