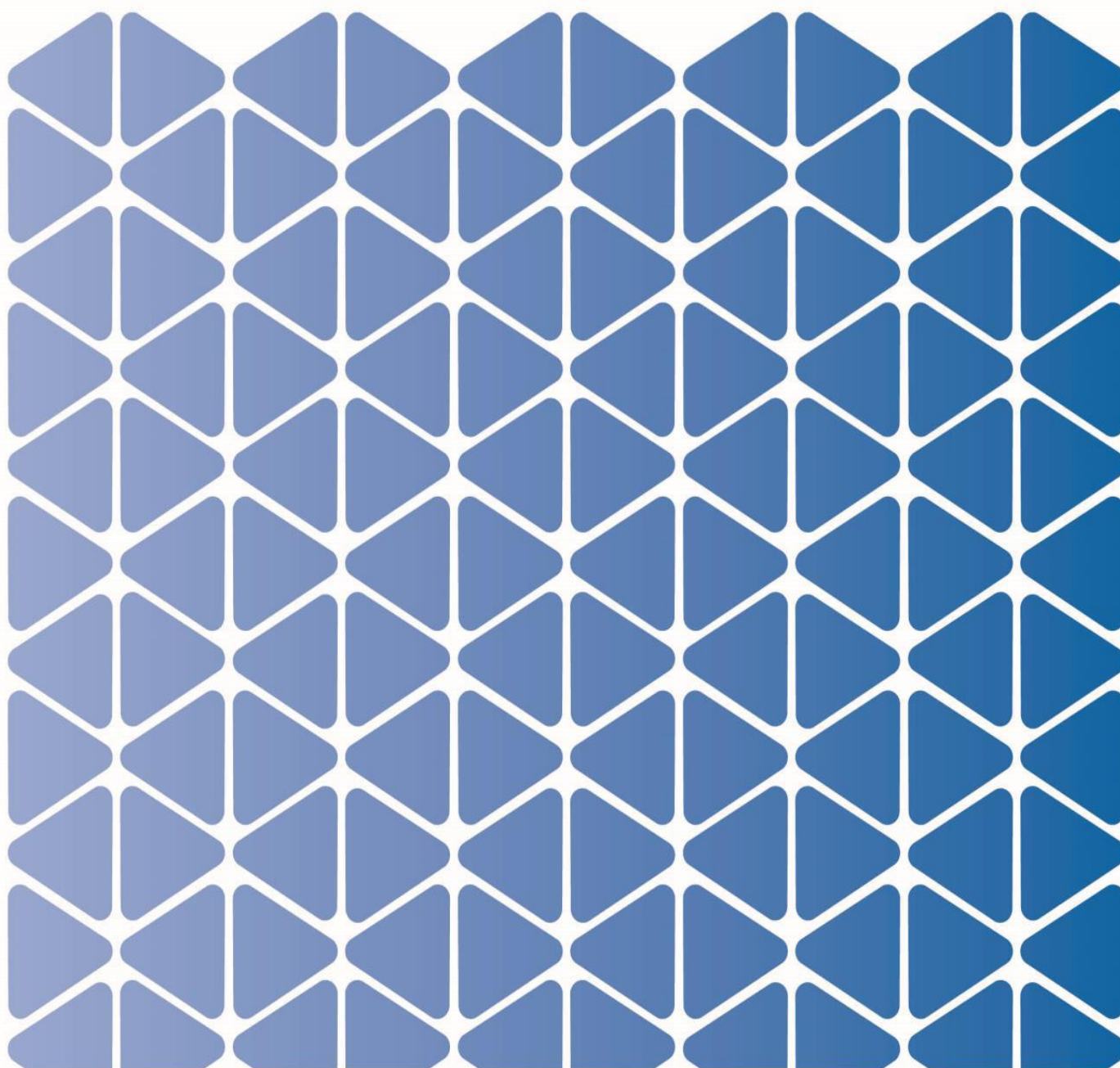


PATIENT INFORMATION**MENTAL WELLBEING AND
PAIN MANAGEMENT**

This leaflet has been developed for patients in the Pain Management Service.

Mental Wellbeing and Pain Management are closely linked, as stress/negative emotions can worsen pain. Improving mental wellbeing can improve coping and quality of life.

What is mental wellbeing?

It can help to think about "being well" as something you do, rather than something you are.

Evidence suggests there are five steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing.



Small changes can make a big difference. Building just five actions into our daily lives can increase wellbeing. This is all about taking action to make change – **the more you put in, the more you are likely to get out.**

Planning and preparation are key, so remember to use a diary to schedule planned activities and involve your friends and family. In planning your time, you will take an active role in managing your wellbeing and lifting your mood.

1. Connect

Connecting with others is vital when managing persistent pain because social isolation can amplify your pain levels by increasing stress and hypervigilance.

Benefits of connection for pain management:

- **Reduces Pain Intensity:** Feeling socially connected provides a protective effect, often leading to higher pain tolerance.
- **Improves Mental Health:** Strong ties help reduce the anxiety and depression that frequently accompany long-term pain, which prevents these emotions from further increasing your symptoms.
- **Validation and Empowerment:** Connecting with people who have similar experiences provides essential validation, helping you feel heard and understood rather than judged or stigmatised.
- **Practical and Informational Support:** Loved ones and peers can assist with daily tasks, share effective coping strategies, and advocate for you during medical appointments.

- **Encourages Healthy Habits:** A support system can motivate you to stay active, stick to treatment plans, and maintain a balanced routine.

Social isolation is linked to increased inflammation, positive social touches like a hug and verbal communication of support have documented analgesic effects.

Support groups provide emotional support, tips on managing pain, and a safe space to connect with others experiencing similar, long-term pain.

Key resources and Support groups:

- **Pain Concern** www.painconcern.org.uk: Provides a helpline (0300 123 0789), email support and an online forum for peer support.
- **Pain Toolkit** www.paintoolkit.org.uk : Offers resources for self-management, including guides and podcasts.
- **Live Well with Pain** www.livewellwithpain.co.uk : A website providing resources for managing persistent pain.
- **Condition-Specific Groups:** Organisations such as **Fibromyalgia Friends Together** www.fibro.org.uk/support-for-fibromyalgia
- **Flippin' Pain** www.flippinpain.co.uk: Offers information and community support to help people manage pain.
- **SupportLine** www.supportline.org.uk/problems/pain: Provides emotional support for those living with chronic pain.

These services help individuals cope with the mental health impacts of pain, such as anxiety and depression, by reducing feelings of isolation.

Practical ideas to increase your connection:

Ways to connect more with others	Tried it (tick)
If possible, take time each day to be with your family, for example, try arranging a fixed time to eat dinner together	
Arrange a day out with friends you have not seen for a while	
Try switching off the TV to talk or play a game with your children, friends or family	
Call someone rather than emailing or texting for a change	
Signing up to a new activity or joining a club is a great way to meet new people and build connections. To find local activities visit: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/communities/community-services-directory	
Contacted one or more support groups	

Attend a free Healthy Worcestershire Programme which brings together a range of health improvement services to help build social connections closer to where you are living.	
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To self-refer visit:

<https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-adults/healthy-worcestershire>

2. Be active

Being active with chronic pain may seem counterintuitive, but it is one of the most effective ways to break the "vicious cycle" of pain and physical deconditioning.

Benefits of activity/exercise for pain management:

- **Natural Pain Relief:** Exercise triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural "feel-good" hormones and painkillers, which help block pain signals to the brain.
- **Breaking the Inactivity Cycle:** Prolonged rest causes muscles to weaken and joints to stiffen, which actually increases pain and sensitivity over time.
- **Desensitising the Nervous System:** Regular movement can help "reset" the central nervous system, making it less sensitive to touch and movement (reducing central sensitisation).
- **Improved Mobility and Function:** Gentle exercise like walking or swimming improves stamina, flexibility, and coordination, helping you maintain independence in daily tasks.
- **Mental Health Benefits:** Physical activity helps combat the fatigue, anxiety, and depression often associated with long-term pain, improving overall quality of life.
- **Weight Management:** Moving more helps maintain a healthy weight, which reduces the physical pressure on weight-bearing joints like the hips and knees.

Practical ideas to increase your activity:

Ways to increase your activity	Tried it (tick)
The NHS www.nhs.uk/live-well/pain/10-ways-to-ease-pain recommend a "little and often" approach: Start slowly: Begin with low-impact activities like walking or water-based exercises.	
Pace yourself: Avoid overdoing it on "good days," as this can lead to pain flare-ups.	
Choose what you enjoy: You are more likely to stick with an activity you like, whether it's dancing, walking, yoga, or gardening.	

Be specific, What, when, how? E.g., I will swim 15 lengths of breaststroke at my local swimming pool every Friday at 10 a.m.	
Connect with others at the same time and exercise within a group or with a friend.	
Build it into your routine – get off the bus one stop earlier for example. Go for a walk at lunchtime.	
Take a look to see what's going on locally to keep you active: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-adults/get-active	

3. Take notice (Mindfulness)

Mindfulness addresses the complex "pain-stress-pain" cycle.

Benefits of mindfulness for pain management:

- **Interrupting Stress Response:** Pain often keeps the body in a permanent "fight or flight" state, with tense muscles and increased pain sensitivity. Mindfulness activates the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest), lowering heart rate and tension.
- **Preventing "Flare-Crash" Cycles:** Mindfulness increases awareness of early warning signs, helping you pace yourself rather than overdoing it on "good" days and suffering a severe crash later.
- **Independent Pain Relief:** Reduces pain through pathways distinct from the body's natural opioids even when the body has developed a tolerance to traditional painkillers.

Practical ideas to become more mindful:

Ways to become more mindful	Tried it (tick)
Have a 'clear the clutter' day / get a new plant	
Visit a new place for coffee/lunch	
Set time aside to do a guided meditation daily, if you find these useful. https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-meditate-for-beginners/#guided-meditations	
For an award winning Mindfulness for Health (Pain) course look at this website https://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/how-does-mindfulness-help-with-pain	

4. Learn

Continued learning/ trying new activities through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

Benefits of learning for Pain Management:

- **Redirects Attention and Reduces Focus on Pain:** Engaging in stimulating, enjoyable activities forces the brain to shift focus away from pain, reducing its perceived intensity.
- **Improves Mental Health and Self-Esteem:** Learning new things boosts confidence, provides a sense of purpose, and reduces the risk of depression and isolation.

Ways to learn something new	Tried it (tick)
Read a book / join a book club	
Research something personally interesting	
Do a crossword or sudoku	
Uncover local courses to help you boost your skills and learn in your community: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/learning-skills-and-employability/learning-services-worcestershire The Wellbeing and Recovery College offer a wide range of FREE and LOW-COST online and face-to-face courses across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. https://www.hwellbeingandrecoverycollege.org.uk/	

5. Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research. Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

Benefits of Giving for Pain Management:

- **Social engagement helps "rewire" the brain's pain response:** Moving from a focus on the pain to a focus on life, can significantly decrease pain intensity and improve overall well-being.

Ways to Give	Tried it (tick)
Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a	

week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.	
Volunteering is a great way to get to know your local community and make a difference in your area. To find out about available volunteering opportunities visit: https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/communities/volunteering	

The measure below will provide an indicator of your overall wellbeing right now and can be a useful tool for you to keep on track - checking how the changes you make affect your quality of life.

WHO (Five) Well-Being Index (1998 version)

Please indicate for each of the five statements which is closest to how you have been feeling over the last two weeks. Notice that higher numbers mean better well-being.

Example: If you have felt cheerful and in good spirits more than half of the time during the last two weeks, put a tick in the box with the number 3 in the upper right corner.

<i>Over the last two weeks:</i>	All the time	Most of the time	More than half of the time	Less than half of the time	Some of the time	At no time
1. I have felt cheerful and in good spirits	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. I have felt calm and relaxed	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. I have felt active and vigorous	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. I woke up feeling fresh and rested	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. My daily life has been filled with things that interest me	5	4	3	2	1	0

You can learn more about all of this at

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

Other useful links/resources:

- Mind Side by Side <https://sidebyside.mind.org.uk/>
- NHS Every mind matters - <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters>
- NHS Mental wellbeing audio guides –for guidance in coping with low mood, anxiety, low confidence etc <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/>
- MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- Living Life to the Full - <https://littf.com/> (Free online courses covering low mood, stress and resilience. Work out why you feel as you do, how to tackle problems, build confidence, get going again, feel happier, stay calm, tackle upsetting thinking and more)

- Moodscope - <https://www.moodscope.com/> - Track your mood on a graph to understand what gets to you.
- Guided meditations - Set time aside to do a guided meditation daily, if you find these useful.
 - A 10 minute bedtime meditation if you are struggling with sleep.- <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/coronavirus/long-term-health-conditions-and-mental-wellbeing/#1>
 - 8 minute muscle relaxation <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/coronavirus/long-term-health-conditions-and-mental-wellbeing/#>

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything please follow below:

Urgent mental health support contact details:

If you need help with a mental health crisis or emergency, you should get immediate expert advice and assessment.

It's important for you to know that support services are available for you to access whatever you're going through.

Crisis Team: **111 (option 2)** (free phone 24 hrs a day 365 days per week)

The Samaritans: **116 123**

Your GP can support you

If you need immediate support call **999** or present to A&E.

Local Routine mental health support details:

1 in 4 people will experience common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression each year. Living with persistent pain can make you more vulnerable to this and in turn this can increase your pain intensity/reduce helpful coping. If you're over 16 and registered with a GP in Herefordshire or Worcestershire you can refer yourself to the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Talking Therapies by phone (0300 013 57 27) or by completing their online form

www.talkingtherapies.hwcht.nhs.uk

Alternatively, you can speak to your GP practice.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.