

# Persistent pain self management jigsaw



Living with persistent (chronic) pain can affect many areas of your life.

Different things can affect your level of pain and there are many different components which can help you to manage your pain. These components can be likened to a jigsaw.

Your pain is individual to you but many people with persistent pain find that they need more information on all or some of the jigsaw pieces mentioned.

The benefit of a jigsaw approach is that you can make each piece of the jigsaw as big or as small as you need. Most people will require all of the components even if the role they play is small. Piecing together your own pain management jigsaw takes time and practice.

We would encourage you to try to work out how each part could work best for you.

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## Understanding your condition

We know that understanding pain can be helpful. You may wish to watch “understanding pain in five minutes” or “tame the beast” both available from the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Pain Management website. They explain the differences between acute and persistent pain and the things which can impact on them.

## Flare up plan

Flare Ups are unfortunately a part of living with persistent pain. Writing your own flare up plan of what works and what doesn't can be helpful so you can use this during a flare up.

## Activity management / pacing

Often people tend to fall in to doing too much, flaring up pain and then recovering. Look at prioritising, planning and pacing your activities throughout the day and week.

## Set realistic goals

Doing things which matter to you are important. Making the smallest step towards a goal which is important to you can make a big difference.

## Communication

It is important to talk! Support from friends and family can be helpful, explaining to others how you are feeling and how they can best support you.

## Self care

You might want to try different types of activities which support your own self-care. You may wish to try relaxation or meditation.

## Unhelpful thinking / emotions

Keeping a diary can help you understand if and how your emotions affect your pain. Stress and low mood can make pain feel worse for a lot of people. Thinking about how we manage these areas can also then help your pain management. You can also link with the mental health practitioners or community connectors / link workers if you feel you need more information on this.

## Activity

Being active within your ability is very important. Gentle exercise can be helpful within your pain management and general health. Activity classes can be enjoyable and there are lots of options within activity and leisure services within Ayrshire and Arran.

## Sleep

People with persistent pain often find that they have difficulty getting to sleep or waken often throughout the night. For more advice and sleep diaries please see the pain management website leaflet section or workbook.

## Medication

We know that medication is only a small part of your overall pain management plan and unfortunately we don't have specific medications which can cure persistent pain.

It is always important to take medications as prescribed. If your medications are not helping, it might be useful to have a review with a prescribing clinician to talk about reducing or having a trial

stop for some of your medications. Any changes would be done with the support of a health care professional. Pharmacists are available within your family doctor (GP) practice and also in your local community pharmacy. They are able to provide clinical advice around all of your medication enquires.

## Further information

More information on all these areas can be found on the NHS Ayrshire and Arran Pain Management website: <https://www.nhsaa.net/pain-management-service/>

## Further useful websites:

Pain Association Scotland:  
[www.painassociation.com](http://www.painassociation.com)

Living Well with Pain:  
[www.livewellwithpain.co.uk](http://www.livewellwithpain.co.uk)

Active Scotland: [www.nhsinform.scot/health-living/keeping-active](http://www.nhsinform.scot/health-living/keeping-active)

Moodjuice: [www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk)

Pain Concern: [www.painconcern.org.uk](http://www.painconcern.org.uk)

The British Pain Society:  
[www.britishpainsociety.org](http://www.britishpainsociety.org)

NHS Inform (Muscle or Joint Problems): <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints>

The Pain Toolkit: <http://www.paintoolkit.org/>

The Pain Self Management Jigsaw is used and modified with permission and thanks from NHS Fife Pain Management Service.