

# PainOptions

## Get The Basics Right

How to manage musculoskeletal pain



### **Thorough assessment**

This should include a detailed history about your problem, symptoms, general health and a physical examination to screen for significant injury or pathology.

### **Imaging may not always be helpful**

Imaging (x-rays and scans) is only needed when serious injury or pathology is suspected, which is uncommon with most musculoskeletal pain.

### **Patient centred education and care**

Understanding your problem, the cause of your pain, and your treatment options is critical to your recovery. Individualised education should commence immediately and should be centred around your specific situation, your goals, and what you can do to manage your pain and optimise your recovery.

### **Exercise and active treatment for all**

Exercise has been shown to be helpful in assisting recovery and should commence at the earliest opportunity. What type and how much exercise differs for each person though. 'Hands on' treatments such as massage and manipulation may also be helpful, but should not be relied upon in the long term.

### **Resume activity and return to work at the earliest opportunity**

Getting back to work can be an important part of your recovery. You should discuss options to facilitate early resumption of work and activity with your healthcare team.

### **Use of screening tools**

Screening questionnaires help to identify additional factors contributing to pain that can impact on recovery. For some people, this can help identify if different or additional treatment is needed.

### **Consider the effect of other factors**

For some people, factors such as poor sleep, low mood and increased stress can amplify their symptoms. Other people might equate pain with damage and unnecessarily avoid activities, further restricting their function. It is important to discuss these thoughts and concerns with your healthcare team.

### **Monitor, modify or refer**

Your healthcare team should be formally tracking your progress at regular intervals (two, six, and twelve weeks) and consider modifying your treatment or referral to a specialist if you are not recovering.

### **Non-surgical care for most**

For the majority of musculoskeletal pain, surgery is not required. Non-surgical care should be trialled first, typically for a minimum of three months, in most cases.

*These guidelines are based on current best evidence: What does best practice care for musculoskeletal pain look like? BJSM 2019*

## Practical Solutions for Complex Problems