

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

It's common for people with chronic pain to also experience anxiety and depression and evidence shows these conditions share many of the same pathways in the body and the brain. Anxiety or depression can contribute to pain intensity and, at the same time, episodes of anxiety and depression can be triggered by persistent pain. While some medications can help with anxiety and depression, many pain management treatments such as mind-body therapies, nutrition and exercise can play a critical role in managing depression and anxiety as well.

TALK TO PROFESSIONALS

- In many talking therapies, people are taught to monitor and notice automatic thoughts that are negative.
- Depression and anxiety both involve escalated thought and feeling patterns that are negative and not always proportionate to what is going on. This means they cause more distress than necessary and can contribute to a pain cycle.
- Depression is common and treatable but, if left unchecked, can make managing pain more difficult.
- Don't ignore depression. If you have any concerns about depressive symptoms you are experiencing, tell your doctor.

TRAIN TO RELAX

People in pain can train to relax their systems in different ways. Once you find out what works best for you, repeat those activities or tasks as consistently as possible or whenever your symptoms occur.

Examples of relaxing activities include:

- Breathing exercises
- Meditation
- Down time with people who you can unwind with and be yourself around
- High-energy exercises that can have relaxing after-effects
- Low-energy exercises that can be grounding (e.g., yoga, tai chi)
- Spending time in nature or with animals
- Activities you find personally enjoyable and temporarily distracting

- Another strategy, which may sound strange but can help, is to put aside time each day to allow yourself to worry. During this scheduled time, you can either let your brain flow freely or write down what's concerning you.

SELF-MANAGING THE PAIN-ANXIETY-TENSION CYCLE

If you find yourself excessively worrying when you're on your own, you can try to break the pain-anxiety-tension cycle by:

- Stopping and acknowledging the worry. Remember: if you resist, it persists!
- Reminding yourself that worrying is normal when we're confronted with a threatening problem without enough information.
- Refocusing your attention from the worry to a distracting task or activity.

RESOURCES

- BC Crisis Line: 1-800-784-2433
- Pain Support Line: 1-844-880-PAIN
- Reach out to your family doctor for a referral to a counsellor
- If you can't wait for a doctor's referral for help covered by MSP or your employer, try to seek low cost or free counselling through HeretoHelp - <https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/q-and-a/where-can-i-find-free-or-low-cost-counselling>
- <https://www.liveplanbe.ca/pain-education/anxiety>
- <https://www.liveplanbe.ca/pain-education/depression/chronic-pain-and-depression>
- <https://psychcentral.com/lib/living-with-chronic-pain-and-depression/>
- <https://www.psycom.net/chronic-pain-illness-anxiety>