

# Good to know about pain

## The body's warning signal

That it hurts is a built-in protective reflex. The pain warns us that something is damaged or is being damaged in the body, it makes us react so that hopefully nothing serious will happen.

Pain is a complicated phenomenon and can be described as an unpleasant physical or emotional experience. Everyone experiences [running pain](#) at some point, but there are no methods to objectively measure how intensely you feel pain, only those who are in pain know how the pain feels.

## The brain talks about that and where it hurts

The pain nerves and the experience of pain have several different levels in the body. The pain signals start in the body when the pain nerves are stimulated. In the spinal cord, the pain impulses are switched to new nerve pathways, which carry the pain signals further partly to the brain but also directly to the body's muscles.

That the muscles receive the information immediately is shown, for example, when you pull away the hand that has been placed on a hot plate even before you have consciously had time to feel that it hurts. In the brain, the pain impulses first reach the pain center of the brain. From the pain center, the signals then go on to the cerebral cortex and it is only when they have reached there that you become fully aware of the pain and where on the body it hurts.

## The interpretation of pain affects how painful it is

You interpret the pain in your consciousness. If you know it is harmless, it often passes faster. On the other hand, if you perceive the pain as dangerous and feel strong fear, it can hurt more. It is also often easier to put up with pain if you know what the pain is due to and that it passes.

## The body can regulate pain itself

Within research, there is agreement that there is a so-called gate mechanism in the spinal cord. This "gate" can to some extent select the information that is passed on. It acts as a kind of volume control. There are also "volume controls" in the brain that affect the activity in the pain system, including the production of own pain relief. When you get certain types of treatments such as massage and acupuncture, the gate mechanism is used, but also your own pain-regulating systems. Impulses are sent that can compete with and block the impulses that reach the brain and signal pain. You then experience less pain. This usually works best for temporary pain, but can also affect long-term pain.

## Acute and prolonged pain

Pain is usually divided into acute and prolonged, sometimes called chronic, pain.

There is no clear time limit between these, but the pain is often considered long-lasting if you have been in pain for at least three months.

## Acute pain often has a clear cause

Acute pain occurs when, for example, you happen to burn yourself, get an acute back shot, sprain your foot or have [surgery](#). The acute pain is caused by tissue damage and usually passes when the injury has healed.

The effects of the acute pain can manifest themselves in several ways. If you suddenly get a lot of pain, you can start sweating cold, turn pale, breathe faster and deeper, get palpitations and high blood pressure. Maybe you feel bad and feel dizzy.

## Long lasting pain

Prolonged pain is pain that persists after the time it usually takes for an injury to heal, usually 3-6 months. Muscle rheumatism , rheumatoid arthritis , osteoarthritis , nerve damage, multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia are examples of causes of long-term pain. You can also have, for example, long-term headaches, muscle aches or backaches. The pain can sometimes be due to a disability.

You do not have to be in pain all the time for the pain to be called long-lasting. It can also be about pain that comes back again and again, such as migraines .

The term chronic pain can be misleading because you may think you must be in pain all your life, but that does not have to be the case. The chronic pain can be treated with certain medications and other measures. Evil may not be completely eradicated, but it can be alleviated.

### **Prolonged pain can affect how you feel**

If you have been in pain for a long time, the pain can affect your physical and mental performance, sleep and sex life. This in turn can affect how you feel in general and arouse feelings of depression and hopelessness. The relationship with relatives and colleagues can be affected, not only by the impaired ability to cope with chores at home and at work, but also by feeling mentally worse from the pain itself. The pain can also cause concern that something is seriously wrong.

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