

# ACUTE VS. CHRONIC PAIN

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What is pain?

What is the difference between acute and chronic pain?



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## Acute Vs. Chronic Pain

### What is pain?

Pain occurs when something hurts, causing an uncomfortable or unpleasant feeling. The presence of pain often means that something is wrong. Each individual is the best judge of his or her own pain.

### What is the difference between acute and chronic pain?

Acute pain usually comes on suddenly and is caused by something specific. It is sharp in quality. Acute pain usually does not last longer than six months. It goes away when there is no longer an underlying cause for the pain. Causes of acute pain include:

- Surgery
- Broken bones
- Dental work
- Burns or cuts
- Labor and childbirth

After acute pain goes away, a person can go on with life as usual.

Chronic pain is pain that is ongoing and usually lasts longer than six months. This type of pain can continue even after the injury or illness that caused it has healed or gone away. Pain signals remain active in the nervous system for weeks, months, or years. Some people suffer chronic pain even when there is no past injury or apparent body damage. Chronic pain is linked to conditions including:

- Headache

- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Nerve pain
- Back pain
- Fibromyalgia pain

People who have chronic pain can have physical effects that are stressful on the body. These include tense muscles, limited ability to move around, a lack of energy, and appetite changes. Emotional effects of chronic pain include depression, anger, anxiety, and fear of re-injury. Such a fear might limit a person's ability to return to their regular work or leisure activities.

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