

# How pain may affect a resident

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A person-centred and bio-psycho-social approach to pain management is built on understanding the ways in which a person can be affected by pain. It is important to understand that these effects are often connected with one another, and can vary depending on the cause, intensity, and location of pain. Other things that can affect a person's experience of pain include their beliefs about pain and ageing.

## Functional effects

- Pain can make it difficult to move in certain ways. The kind of movement that is affected will then affect what a person is able to do. Pain can, therefore, limit the ways a person is able to complete tasks in their day-to-day life.
- For example, back pain may make it difficult to get up out of a chair or out of bed. This can also affect comfort and ease of sleeping in bed, the length of time a person can stand or how they are able to use the toilet, for example.
- Pain may inhibit a person's ability or motivation for physical activity, which can lead to functional disability or continued/more pain.
- Engagement with leisure activities that require functional mobility may be limited by pain. Some of these activities may have social elements that are also affected as a result.

## Social effects

- Pain may limit a person's ability to attend or participate in social events, who may then begin to feel socially isolated.
- Pain may make it difficult to engage appropriately and be present with family and friends, particularly if pain has affected a person emotionally and behaviourally.

## Mental health and psychological effects

- The ways in which pain interferes with a person's life can lead to psychological distress. Anxiety and depression are associated with experiencing chronic pain.
- Pain can reinforce feelings of fear and anxiety, leading to behaviours designed to avoid pain.
- If pain affects sleep quality, this can also cause stress, anxiety and irritability.
- Functional and social losses due to pain can also affect mental health. Likewise, psychological difficulties due to pain can also affect one's social relationships.
- Pain may affect a person's ability to focus and pay attention to things like completing tasks or following a conversation, movie or book.

## Quality of life

- Quality of life takes into account all of the ways in which a person's life can be affected, for example, physically, psychologically, socially.
- Chronic pain – particularly that which is not managed or poorly managed – is associated with poorer quality of life.

## People living with dementia

- Some people may not be able to express or fully understand the ways in which pain affects them. Careful observation of their behaviours and mood changes can provide some indication.
  - Behaviours of people living with dementia may change and be different from what is normal for each person. It is important that any change in behaviour or mood be considered as a possible response to pain.
  - People in pain may withdraw or lash out, or they may display being confused, upset or irritable.
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