

# The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) developed the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) to conceptualise and classify disability. Implementing the ICF is challenging as it was originally developed as a classification system, rather than a clinical care model. But the concepts of the ICF are relevant for pain management in aged care. The ICF is an advanced topic as understanding some elements of the model can be difficult. We recommend understanding and applying the concepts of the ICF.

You can read more about the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health at <https://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/>

Chronic pain is disabling. The ICF is a framework to understand the extent that chronic pain has disabled the person. This model uses the bio-psycho-social model to conceptualise how a person's disease, activity, participation, personal factors and the environment all interact together to affect a person's experience of the pain they feel and its impact on their life.

The ICF is a bio-psycho-social, person-centred approach to disability. We use it to think about what is happening to the person's:

- **Body functions and structures.** Are there structural impairments in the body?
- **Activity** with tasks. Does the person have limitations with their activities?
- **Participation** with life at the facility. Is the person's participation limited?

We also need to think about the person's situation as this also affects the extent of disability that a person may experience. This includes considering the:

- **Environment** that they live in. This is the physical space they live in, as well as the social network and workplace environment.
- **Personal factors** such as their gender, age, personality, coping style, socioeconomic background, education, past profession, and overall behaviour pattern.

