



## FACT SHEET 5

# How can I help someone living with pain?

People who care for a family member or friend living with long-term (chronic) pain play a vital role in making sure their loved one's pain is managed correctly. This helps lead to a better quality of life for the person living with pain.

As a carer you have a unique insight and understanding of what it's like for a person living with pain. This is invaluable as understanding and compassion towards the person is often reported as being one of the things that can help someone manage their condition.

Adapted from Chronic Pain Australia at [https://chronicpinaustralia.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=303](https://chronicpinaustralia.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=303).

### Take care of yourself

Being in pain has a big impact on a person's quality of life. When someone you care for is living with pain, you can see how it can be exhausting and irritating

for them. But, you shouldn't overlook how caring for someone in pain can be physically taxing and emotionally draining for you too. It's important to take good care of yourself.

Remember you can't be there for someone else unless you first look after yourself.

Find support at Carer Gateway - [www.carergateway.gov.au](http://www.carergateway.gov.au) | T: 1800 422 737

If you're a young carer, you can get additional support from [www.youngcarersnetwork.com.au](http://www.youngcarersnetwork.com.au).

### Being there helps

There are plenty of ways to help someone in pain. Support helps the person you're caring for feel less alone and feel looked after. It can help them feel more able to deal with their symptoms.

## 10 ways to help someone you care for



### 1. Ask about their pain

Everyone has a unique, individual experience of pain. You probably already know about their pain but asking how they're going reminds them you care.

- How is your pain today?
- Will your pain affect what you do today?
- What things make it feel worse?
- What things help?



### 2. Listen and show warmth

It's not easy to understand constant pain unless you've been there. You know their pain is real but don't brush off their pain by saying they'll be fine or it'll pass. It may be well meaning but is unlikely to help. Look at the world from their perspective and appreciate that they're doing their best to get on with their life in the best way they can.



### 3. Don't define them by the pain

Sometimes people can define themselves by their pain. As their carer it helps to remind them of the rounded human they are and what makes them special.



### 4. Ask how you can help

Pain symptoms can change day to day so keep checking in. That way you can stay on the same page. Never underestimate how your role as a carer gives them a sense of a normal life. If you've asked your loved one to go to activities or social engagements but they say no, don't let that stop you from asking them again. And again. They still want to have fun too.



### 5. Use a pain scale

Have a pain scale from 1 to 10.

Ask the person you care for what their level of pain is:

- 1 = free of pain and feeling fabulous
- 5 = having some pain but managing it
- 10 = having the worst pain ever

This'll help you understand how they're feeling and how you can support them.



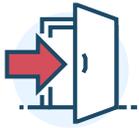
### 6. Look for signs of pain

You spend a lot of time with the one you care for and probably know the signs when they're in pain. For example, decreased activity, poor concentration, sleep disturbances, mood swings, moaning, hand wringing, irritability, restlessness and grimacing. But, pain can be mentally tiring too. Keep an eye out for any signs of stress or depression.



### 7. Respect what they can and can't do

Every day can be different. Someone with pain might be happy to walk somewhere one day or do physical activity, but another day, may struggle to get out of bed. Recognise their physical abilities each day. When the person in pain needs to stop what they're doing to sit down, lie down or go home – go with it without judgement.



### 8. Offer to go to appointments with them

Going to medical appointments with the person you're caring for, not only helps you understand their condition, it gives you chance to find out more about their medication. Being there helps be their back-up to hear all the information given, and it's an emotional support too. As the carer, it can be helpful to arrange appointments or speak with health professionals, work bosses or colleagues, teachers, family or friends to extend support.



### 9. Encourage healthy living and positive thinking

It can be easy to slip into unhealthy ways when feeling severe pain. Encouraging the one you love to look after themselves is a really positive thing to do. This might involve:

- planning meals, grocery shopping or cooking healthier food together,
- going for walks or other physical activities together.

Staying positive can help the person you care for feel more positive and help them build confidence and hope. This doesn't mean dismissing their feelings or ignoring their experiences, but gently encouraging positivity when the time is right.



### 10. Explore various pain relief options

Remember! You may not always be able to help in pain management directly. Sometimes their pain can take a toll on your health as well. Refer to [Factsheet 3](#) for things you can do to help.

## Look after yourself too.

Care for yourself and take the time and space you need to recuperate. Support is available for you:

Call Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737 (8am-5pm, Mon-Fri).

More tips for carers and people with pain can be found here:

- National Pain Week at <http://www.nationalpainweek.org.au/>.
- Australian Pain Management Association at <https://www.painmanagement.org.au/>.
- Chronic Pain Australia at <http://chronicpainaustralia.org.au/index.php>.
- Pain Australia at <http://www.painaustralia.org.au/>.

Look out for Chronic Pain apps, blogs and podcasts. It can help the person you're caring for, know they're not alone.

Pain Australia has an excellent directory at [www.painaustralia.org.au/getting-help/pain-directory](http://www.painaustralia.org.au/getting-help/pain-directory).

Remember! Seek support from your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about how to help someone take their opioid medicines.

**If you're looking for support as a carer, visit the Carer Gateway website at <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/help-advice> or call them on 1800 422 737 to find local services and support.**

All factsheets referenced above can be found at <https://www.carersaustralia.com.au/opioids-information/caring-for-someone-living-with-pain>.