Chronic pain is pain that persists beyond the expected healing time of an injury. Unlike acute pain which is caused by tissue damage, chronic pain or persistent pain is less about the structural or tissue damage and more about the sensitivity of the nervous system and ‘non tissue related factors’.

Significant research has shown that exercise is an essential aspect in the treatment of chronic pain. Often when we experience chronic pain we avoid activity in an attempt to not cause pain flare ups. However we know that gradually over time people experiencing chronic pain become less able to complete activities which were previously enjoyed, for example walking, and commonly also have difficulties in completing activities of daily living such as housework.

**Exercise is Medicine!** and is an important daily strategy used to assist in the management of pain conditions.

- Stretch to cool down, not warm up, and do short bursts of exercise, not long stretches.
- It is important to start slowly when beginning an exercise program, and avoid pushing into stronger pain. It is often useful to use the 0-10 scale to monitor your pain levels while exercising.
- If pain levels increase by more than 2 points from baseline you should stop and modify.

**Things to remember**

- Remember that ‘Exercise is Medicine!’ and is an important daily strategy used to assist in the management of pain conditions.
**Types of Exercises Recommended**

Exercise Right recommends combining multiple forms of exercise for chronic pain, including:

**Stretching exercises**
It’s important to stretch at least once a day to help increase flexibility, loosen tight/stiff muscles, and improve your range of motion. Stretching everyday will help ease your everyday movements.

**Strengthening exercises**
To help build strong muscles, for example, squats, wall push ups or bicep curls.

**Cardiovascular exercises**
Walking, swimming or bike riding provide light aerobic exercise, which provides a list of healing benefits. If working out in a gym, try an elliptical trainer (which is lower impact than a treadmill).

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**Right Professional**

**Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP)**
An accredited exercise physiologist can analyse your move-
Consult an Accredited Exercise Physiologist for an individually tailored exercise program to help with the management of your pain condition.

**Right Place**

**Swimming and water aerobics in a heated pool**
Warm water relaxes muscles, and the weightlessness helps with movement and minimises the load on your joints. Avoid exercise in cold water as this can make muscles tense.

**Chronic Pain Program at a rehabilitation centre**
There are specific chronic pain programs and classes run at major hospitals and rehabilitation centres that can provide expert advice and assistance in managing your condition.

**Right Time**

**Exercise in the mid-morning or early afternoon**
If you have chronic pain, you may be best exercising in the mid-morning or early afternoon – or otherwise when any pain medication is in its peak effectiveness. Avoid exercis-
ing when your muscles may be tense, or when the threat of fatigue is at its worst.

While you sleep, your body temperature drops, leaving you stiff and lacking flexibility in the morning. Since flexibility helps your joints move in their full range of motion during a workout, you may not perform optimally first thing in the morning. Everybody is different however, so listen to your body and talk to your accredited exercise professional for more advice.

**Types of exercises recommended**
Exercise Right also recommends attending a Pain Management Program at a rehabilitation centre or hospital where there is multidisciplinary team of Medical and Allied Health professionals who are skilled in the treatment and management of chronic pain conditions.

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