



Pain that persists beyond the normal healing time of 12 weeks

CHRONIC PAIN

Chronic pain, as defined by the Australian Pain Management Association, is a pain that persists beyond the normal healing time of 12 weeks [1]. This pain is all to present in everyday life and I am sure that either yourself or someone you know is living with chronic pain. To understand the sheer scope of this condition, statistics show one in five Australians live with chronic pain and as of 2007, and it is costing Australia \$34 Billion dollars, or nearly \$11, 000 per person with chronic pain. Considering that was 10 years ago you can only imagine what the cost is now. With chronic pain producing such a financial, physical and emotional toll on Australians, where do we as Exercise Physiologist, play a role?

Extensive literature has shown the benefits of exercise as a form of treatment for a variety of chronic pain conditions ranging from lower back, neck and shoulder pain. A meta-analysis by Cochrane Library covering 264 studies and nearly 20,000 participants found that physical activity and exercise have favourable effects in reducing pain and improving physical function [2]. Furthermore, using motor control exercises to treat chronic pain in its early stages has been found to provide improvements in pain, function and global impression of recovery [3].

With all this evidence showing the benefits of exercise, why is that it is still costing Australia so much money? Unfortunately, research shows that adherence to exercise can be impeded due to low levels of baseline physical activity, low self-efficacy, depression, anxiety, increased pain levels when exercising and poor social support [4]. Therefore, when we look at chronic pain and exercise as treatment we must look beyond the actual exercise and foster an environment that helps erodes these barriers to adherence.

Building a strong working relationship with your Exercise Physiologist and other Allied Health Professionals will give you or those you know living chronic pain the tools they need to begin their journey on the road to recovery.

Matthew Byrne
Accredited Exercise Physiologist

