



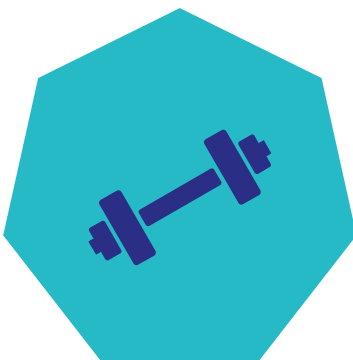
Contact us today

Tel: 0330 133 1488

Email: info@moveability.org.uk

→ Managing Chronic Pain Naturally

5 Easy Self-help Ideas



➤ Chronic pain can hold you back and impact your life in so many different ways.

You might struggle with poor sleep, find everyday tasks a challenge or find yourself caught in a vicious cycle of pain, stress and anxiety.

Chronic pain is a serious long-term health condition that can lead to both physical and mental health complications.

Thank you for downloading our free guide. By doing so, you've taken the first step toward managing your pain naturally with five simple strategies you can implement at home.

Whilst the exercises and techniques featured are tried and tested and have proven effective, we advise that you always consult with a healthcare professional first before trying anything new.



Restorative Sleep (or lack of it!)

Chronic pain can make nights unbearable, and you may even dread the thought of going to bed. Unfortunately, some medications used for pain relief, such as codeine and morphine, can actually lead to insomnia, creating a challenging dilemma. You may find yourself having to choose between temporary pain relief and getting enough sleep.

A good night's sleep can enhance your ability to tolerate pain, as it allows your body the time it needs to rest and repair itself. It's widely known that poor sleep can significantly affect our ability to function, with research indicating that it often heightens sensitivity to pain. Encouragingly, many studies have also found that in the long term, quality sleep may reduce chronic pain.



Self-help idea

It's a good idea to consume sleep-promoting foods in the evening, such as:

- Cherries
- Almonds
- Warm milk or chamomile tea
- Bananas
- Dark chocolate

These foods are rich in sleep-regulating hormones like melatonin and serotonin, as well as nutrients such as magnesium, which can enhance sleep quality and help you fall asleep faster.

Why not also try slow rhythmic breathing - we feature box breathing later in this guide.



The pain, anxiety, stress cycle

Dealing with chronic pain can lead to feelings of anxiety and frustration, which in turn can increase stress levels. In fact, anxiety and stress not only trigger chronic pain but can also be a consequence of that pain, creating a vicious cycle that can make life feel unbearable.

When it comes to managing pain, learning to control anxiety levels is crucial. When we are anxious, we are more sensitive to pain due to the chemicals we release.

According to the Institute for Chronic Pain, anxiety and stress can negatively affect the immune system and increase inflammation, which can aggravate the many causes of chronic pain. We want to help you break this cycle, as it is essential for improving your quality of life.



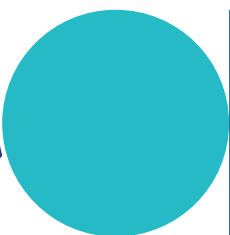
Self-help idea

Whenever you feel your anxiety levels rising, try the 3-3-3 rule:

1. Look around you and memorise three different colours you see
2. Name three sounds you can hear
3. Move three parts of your body - such as your ankles, fingers, or arms

This mental exercise can help centre your mind and bring you back to the present moment.

Additionally, incorporating gentle exercise into your daily routine, and perhaps joining classes like ours once or twice a week, can enhance your sense of well-being and reduce anxiety. Exercise has been proven to release feel-good hormones and other natural brain chemicals that promote a positive mood.



How you think affects your pain

Unfortunately, pain has become part of your life and may always be an unwanted companion. However, whilst we may not be able to completely eliminate chronic pain, we can take steps to change how we deal with and react to it.

Buddha once said, "How you think about your pain can change how you feel about it, for better or worse".

When pain occurs, we often react with thoughts of dread or anger. Whilst we may not be able to stop those first few thoughts, we can learn to pause, ground and centre ourselves.

Negative thoughts can decrease your tolerance for pain, making it feel worse. In contrast, positive thoughts can reduce both the perception and processing of pain in the brain, making it feel less intense. Therefore, focusing on the positive rather than the negative can be an effective daily pain management strategy.



Self-help idea

Try to surround yourself with positive people - joining classes like ours is perfect for this - and engage in activities such as colouring, doing puzzles, or model building. These can help you refocus your attention from the negative feelings associated with the pain and provide a sense of well-being.

Did you know that our body's energy system works similarly to a network of rivers? If it becomes blocked or contaminated with negative thoughts or emotions, it can stagnate and cease to function effectively, leading to reduced tolerance for chronic pain.

Another way is focusing your attention away from your thoughts and onto your breath. One simple but very effective technique is box breathing, a technique where you inhale, hold your breath, exhale, and hold your breath again, each for an equal count, typically four seconds.



The circle of 'tension 'pain' tension'

Tensing muscles in response to pain can lead to discomfort in other parts of our body. For example, tension-type headaches and migraines are often associated with chronic muscle tension in the shoulders, neck, and head.

When muscles are continually tensed in response to pain, they can cause stiffness, leading to simple movements like walking or getting out of a chair becoming slow and more painful. Prolonged muscle tension decreases circulation, causing a build-up of lactic acid in the muscles.

By focusing on relaxing tense muscles, you may find that your chronic pain becomes easier to manage.



Self-help idea

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) can be an effective way to release tension and promote a feeling of calm. Starting with your feet and working your way up, tense each muscle group for 5-10 seconds and then release it for 10-20 seconds, while consciously noting the difference between tension and relaxation.

Or you can immerse yourself in your favourite music to help relax and refocus your attention from the pain.

- Really hear the words
- Pick out the beats and different instruments
- Let your mind and body sink into the tunes



Chronic pain can be isolating

One of the biggest risk factors associated with chronic pain is loneliness. This can be painful emotionally and have a devastating effect on our mental health, as well as impacting our physical pain levels.

Loneliness and chronic illness can create a vicious cycle; your pain may isolate you, and the resulting loneliness can worsen your health and tolerance for pain.

While your pain may limit what you can do, it doesn't have to keep you from reaching out to others. By far, the most challenging part of beating isolation and loneliness is taking the first step, but it does become easier from there.

Connecting with others in chronic pain can be really beneficial as it helps us feel that we are not alone. Knowing that someone else truly understands because they have been through the same experience can be a great source of comfort.



Self-help idea

Host a night in, inviting your friends and family to come to you. It doesn't have to be a grand event; even a small get-together with one other person is fantastic. Staying home means you can be comfortable and relaxed, enabling you to save your energy for interacting with your guests.

Don't be shy about asking people to bring something; you'll find that most will be happy to contribute.

Explore new and fun ways to interact with others. If leaving home is difficult, consider arranging regular Zoom calls with family or friends.

Joining a social group where members face similar challenges can be extremely beneficial. It provides the opportunity to meet new friends and build an empathetic support network, helping you gain a sense of satisfaction from being able to support others while fostering an overall feeling of belonging. Just as you will find in classes like ours!



→ About MOVEability

At MOVEability, we are committed to making exercise accessible to everyone, regardless of age or ability. For that reason, we have removed many of the barriers to exercise that can prevent some people, including those living with chronic pain, from enjoying the benefits of even occasional gentle exercise. Our classes are seated, making them low-impact and suitable for anyone looking to use exercise as a way to manage pain.

Importantly, there is:

- **No uncertainty:** You'll always know what you'll get with a MOVEability class, as they all follow the same structure
- **No need for upfront payments:** All classes are pay-as-you-go
- **No pressure to attend:** Can't attend? No need to pay, even if you've registered
- **No need to book in advance:** Show up on the day
- **No pressure to get it right:** Do whatever you can manage
- **No need for technology to get the better of you:** one-to-one support accessing our online classes
- **Emphasis on fun and friendship:** So much more than exercise!

We call it the MOVEability way.

Find out more about MOVEability. Head to www.moveability.org.uk

Not local to Berkshire?

Join one of our online classes or contact us about setting up a MOVEability class in your area.

Get in touch

Contact Debbie Medlin and the team on 0330 133 1488 or at info@moveability.org.uk

