



SEPTEMBER TIP SHEET

MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS & CHRONIC PAIN

Chronic pain, one of the most common reasons adults seek medical care, has been linked to activity limitations, dependence on opioids, anxiety and depression, and reduced quality of life. Research shows that **those with chronic pain are 4 times more likely to have depression or anxiety** than those who are pain-free.

Approximately 20% (50 million) of U.S. adults have chronic pain and 8% (20 million) of U.S. adults had high-impact chronic pain. High-impact chronic pain is pain that has lasted three months or longer and is accompanied by at least **one major activity restriction, such as being unable to work outside the home, go to school, or do household chores.** These people report more severe pain, more mental health problems and cognitive impairments, more difficulty taking care of themselves.



Chronic pain can affect your ability to function at home and work. You may find it difficult to participate in social activities and hobbies, which could lead to decreased self-esteem. It is also common for **people with chronic pain to have sleep disturbances, fatigue, trouble concentrating, decreased appetite, and mood changes.** These negative changes in your lifestyle can increase your pain and dampen your overall mood; the frustration of dealing with this can result in depression and anxiety.

If you have pain and are taking **opioids (painkillers)** or talking with your doctor about this treatment option, make sure to plan for safe limited use of these medications as they **are highly addictive. Talk to your doctor about other pain management treatments like:**

- **Antidepressant medications** may relieve pain depression because of shared chemical messengers in the brain.
- **Talk therapy**, also called psychological counseling (psychotherapy), can be effective in treating both conditions.
- **Physical therapy** combined with stress-reduction techniques, exercise, meditation, journaling, learning coping skills and other strategies also may help.
- **Pain rehabilitation** programs provide a team approach to treatment, including medical and psychiatric aspects.