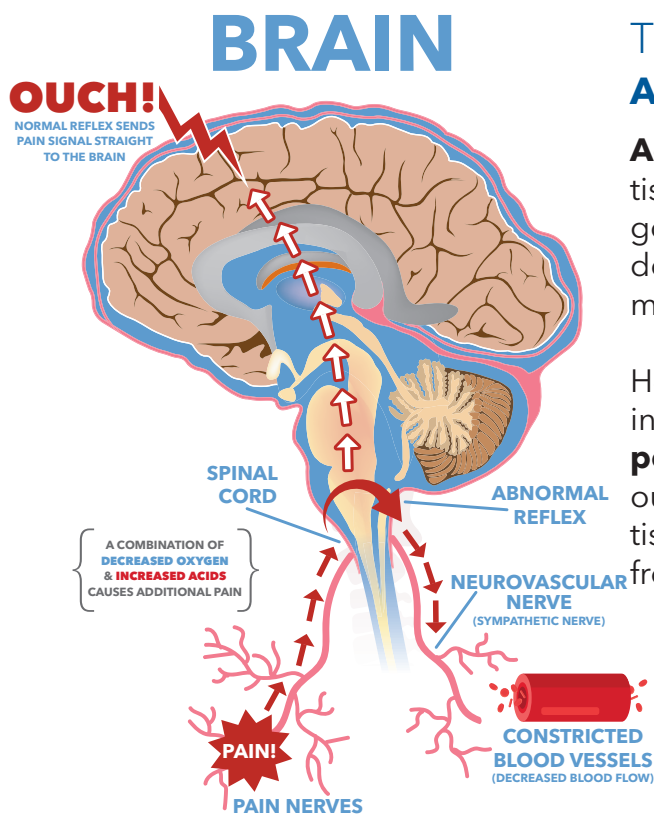


What is Pain?

Pain is a protective mechanism our bodies employ when it senses a threat. This threat could be physical, or it could be a perceived threat. Nerves have receptors that sense things such as temperature, pressure, or movements. Nerves are constantly talking to our body. When we get hurt, nerves from that part of the body send signals to our brain, where they are interpreted as a threat.



Types of Pain:

Acute vs. Chronic/Persistent

Acute pain can occur with an injury or surgery. Once tissues are healed, there is no more threat and the pain goes away. Tissues will heal within weeks to months depending on the injury or surgery, but usually by six months, all healing has taken place.

However, sometimes pain can last long after all the tissues in our body are healed. This is an example of **chronic** or **persistent** pain. The nerves become hypersensitive, and our brain perceives a threat even when there is no actual tissue damage. What your brain thinks is a threat can come from, and be influenced by, multiple things such as:

- Past and current experiences
- Fears and beliefs about pain
- Stressors in family, social, or individual life
- Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues

What can be done about persistent pain?

The good news is that there are ways to calm the nervous system down, so that what your brain used to perceive as a threat, will become less and less severe. These can include:

- Changing behavior patterns or beliefs about pain
- Learning coping skills to help manage stressful situations in your life
- Approach recovery to incorporate treating mental, emotional, and physical health
- Progressively increasing your physical activity level, including both cardio and strengthening exercises

What can a physical and occupational therapist do to help with persistent pain?

A physical therapist can help educate you about pain, so you can know how pain works and remove any misconceptions or fear about your pain. They will help you increase your physical activity level in a safe way by showing and teaching you exercises to help strengthen muscles, improve endurance, and calm down your nervous system so that you can return to doing the things you love with less fear and pain.

Resources



Tame the Beast It's time to rethink persistent pain

Watch the video to learn about new approaches to reducing your pain.

<https://www.tamethebeast.org/#tame-the-beast>



Understanding Pain A 5-minute video

Take 5 minutes to watch this video explaining excellent ways to help you understand pain.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEPK_b2p0JU