



## Pain Rehabilitation at The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh

Chronic pain in children and young people is often difficult to diagnose. Sometimes parents and doctors attribute it to "growing pains" or they think the pain is not real. But not only is pediatric chronic pain "real," it can be intense and excruciating, limiting or stopping a child's normal activities. It can cause a child to become immobile, which only aggravates the condition, leading to more pain, and may eventually lead to emotional issues and isolation.



The Pain Rehabilitation program at The Children's Institute is dedicated to children and adolescents suffering from chronic pain. Chronic pain in youth can have a number of causes and diagnoses, including:

- Reflex neurovascular dystrophy (RND)
- Amplified musculoskeletal pain syndrome (AMPS)
- Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD)
- Pediatric fibromyalgia
- Complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS)

We provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment for these children who suffer from chronic pain. The purpose of the program is to help the child return to his or her daily activities and to educate the child and his or her family on long-term pain management techniques.

### Pain Rehabilitation Team

The treatment team includes clinicians with expertise in chronic pain and *may* include:

- Physician
- Pediatric nurse practitioner
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Psychologist
- Recreational therapist
- Nurse
- Patient manager
- Music Therapist
- Educational Support

### Who Can Benefit:

Our treatment program can help children with chronic pain:

- associated with one or more areas of the body
- that may travel through the body
- from something that typically would not be considered painful (for example, a light breeze or wearing clothing)
- that limits daily activities, such as getting dressed
- that limits the ability to walk, stand or grasp something
- that causes them to discontinue participation in activities
- that causes them to miss significant amounts of school or receive home bound education (including cyber school)

To learn more about the Pain Rehabilitation program or to schedule an evaluation, please call 412.420.2111.

## The Pain Rehabilitation Program – Our Proven Approach

We provide a holistic, balanced approach to chronic pain treatment by incorporating physical therapy, occupational therapy *and* behavioral health therapy. This combined treatment regimen along with comprehensive family education helps to address the mind-body connection and teaches the child how relaxation and stress management can help with long-term pain management.

### Medical/ Physical Component

Medical care focuses on wellness, which may include reducing and ultimately eliminating pain medications. Treatment includes physical therapy, occupational therapy and intense exercise therapy to the area(s) affected by the pain syndrome. This treatment helps to break the cycle of pain and desensitizes the nerves. It promotes increased strength, endurance and agility, and reduces hypersensitivity. Treatment sessions are individualized, and each child is educated on how to progress his or her activities and home exercise once discharged from the program.

### Behavioral Health Component

In addition, behavior health services are provided to:

- identify stressors, pain triggers and warning signals
- teach coping skills and relaxation techniques
- practice appropriate expressions of thoughts and feelings

Our approach is a cognitive behavioral one — focused on understanding how the patient thinks about his or her pain and responds to it. Upon a thorough assessment, we develop an individualized plan that may include:

- relaxation training
- coping skills training
- individualized counseling
- biofeedback training
- patient and family education
- family counseling

Behavioral health services can be secured on both an inpatient and outpatient basis.

### Program Goals

The Pain Rehabilitation team establishes individual goals for each child, which may include:

- Returning full functionality to the affected area
- Returning to school and daily activities
- Increasing strength, endurance and agility
- Decreasing sensitivity to touch
- Using skills to manage pain and stress

**Ultimately, the goal is long-term self-management of chronic pain to achieve an independent lifestyle.**

## Treatment Options

### Outpatient Treatment

Outpatient treatment varies in duration and frequency depending on the child's individual needs. Outpatient treatment incorporates physical and/or occupational therapy sessions lasting 60 minutes in length. During outpatient treatment, the child will be educated on long-term management of his or her chronic pain. Patients who come to The Children's Institute for pain rehabilitation typically start treatment in our outpatient program. Sometimes, if a patient is not making adequate progress as an outpatient, he or she will transition into our inpatient treatment program.

### Inpatient Treatment

Inpatient treatment ranges in duration from an average of two to four weeks based on the patient's individual needs. Children begin a daily schedule of three to five hours of therapy, including physical and occupational therapy. Treatment also includes behavioral health services to address stress reduction, relaxation techniques and counseling. Treatment sessions are designed to meet the individual needs of the child, but it is expected that the child participates fully in all aspects of treatment. Family-centered care is an important aspect of treatment and family members are expected to be actively involved in treatment.

### Follow-Up Treatment

Physical and occupational therapists create an individualized home exercise program for each child. These exercises are to be continued independently by the patient following discharge from any of the treatment programs. Continued follow-up with the referring physician is recommended. Follow-up counseling sessions with a psychologist are also an essential part of ongoing treatment. Outpatient physical or occupational therapy visits will be set up as needed following discharge from an inpatient admission.

**Success!** Our patients in the Pain Rehabilitation program at The Children's Institute have demonstrated positive and statistically significant change in their functional ability as measured by the Functional Disability Inventory. The majority of children we see who have ceased sports activities and stopped attending school have resumed these activities after participation in our program.