



FINDING A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER FOR YOUR PAIN



Take the time to find a health care provider who has the education, skills and willingness to work with you to manage your pain. For more information, read APF's Pain Resource Guide: Getting the Help You Need.

No one should have to live with pain, and ignoring it will only lead to more suffering. Finding the right health care provider to treat your pain is an important step in getting relief.

If you or a family member lives with ongoing pain that your current health care provider is unable or unwilling to manage, it may be time to get a second opinion or find an expert in pain management. This doesn't necessarily mean that you must cut ties with your current provider. But you may benefit from adding a new member to your pain care team — someone who can provide expert advice and clinical experience in pain management, and help you get back to your life and the things you love.

Who Can Treat My Pain?

The answer to this question depends on the type of pain you have, for how long and if there are specific medical conditions or injuries that might contribute to your discomfort.

Pain specialists include, but are not limited to:

- Anesthesiologists
- Neurologists
- Neurosurgeons
- Psychiatrists
- Physical medicine specialists
- Psychologists

Nurses, physician assistants, social workers and physical therapists also play an important role in pain management and can be your greatest ally.

GOING TO BAT FOR YOU: WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A PROVIDER

Try to find a health care provider with whom you feel comfortable. He/she should:

- Believe your report of pain
- Listen carefully to your experiences with pain
- Know how to treat pain and partner with you to develop a pain management plan to reduce your pain and set realistic goals
- Ask you a lot of questions and perform diagnostic or other tests to help identify the problem
- Encourage you to ask questions
- Be comfortable if you disagree or state a preference for your pain care
- Be willing to help educate your family or friends about your pain if need be
- Discuss the risks and benefits of each pain treatment option that is recommended, as well as expected outcomes

What Do I Need to Know?

Some pain specialists offer only one type of therapy (for example, injections or physical therapy), while others provide integrative care that combines multiple therapies (for example, physical rehabilitation, psychological counseling, medication management).

When searching for the right health care provider for your pain needs, make sure to ask:

- Are you certified in pain management?
- Do I need a referral? If so, how do I get one?
- Do you accept my insurance?
- Are you accepting new patients?
- How long will I have to wait to get an appointment?
- Do you treat other people with my type of pain?
- Do you provide integrated care — for example, if I need a combination of therapies to treat my pain?
- What hospital(s) are you affiliated with?
- Are there nurses or physician assistants on staff who are available to talk with me?

Don't be afraid to "interview" a few doctors. You may not feel comfortable in the role of questioner, but it's an important step in advocating for yourself and learning how to take control of your pain. Doing so will help you settle on the person with whom you feel most comfortable.

If you haven't already, organize your medical records, including the results from any lab or imaging tests. Your new provider will want to review these prior to your visit.



Don't forget to:

- Check with your health insurance carrier for a list of providers or practices in your network
- Ask your friends, family members or co-workers — particularly those who've had pain or know someone with pain — for names
- Seek advice from people who belong to pain support groups in your area
- Contact the referral service of a large hospital in your area or the state medical board

Where Can I Find a Provider Near Me?

The following organizations may be able to help you find a pain management physician or pain clinic in your area:

American Academy of Pain Management

1-209-533-9744

www.aapainmanage.org

American Academy of Pain Medicine

1-847-375-4731

www.painmed.org

American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

1-312-464-9700

www.aapmr.org

American Board of Pain Medicine

1-847-375-4726

www.abpm.org

Pain.com

www.pain.com

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

It's important to remember that you aren't alone. The American Pain Foundation (APF) is here to help. APF educates, supports and advocates for people affected by pain.

To meet other people living with pain, join PainAid, APF's online support community, which is available 24/7. For more information, visit www.painfoundation.org. Read APF's online guide to health decision making and educational materials such as *Access Matters: Making Sense of Health Coverage* and the *Pain Resource Guide*.

For information about assistance paying for medications visit:

Patient Advocate Foundation Co-Pay Relief

www.copays.org

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

1-888-4PPA-NOW (477-2669)

www.pparx.org

Also check with your insurance carrier or pharmacy for discounts. Read *Access Matters* and visit www.painfoundation.org/learn/living/financial-info for more information.