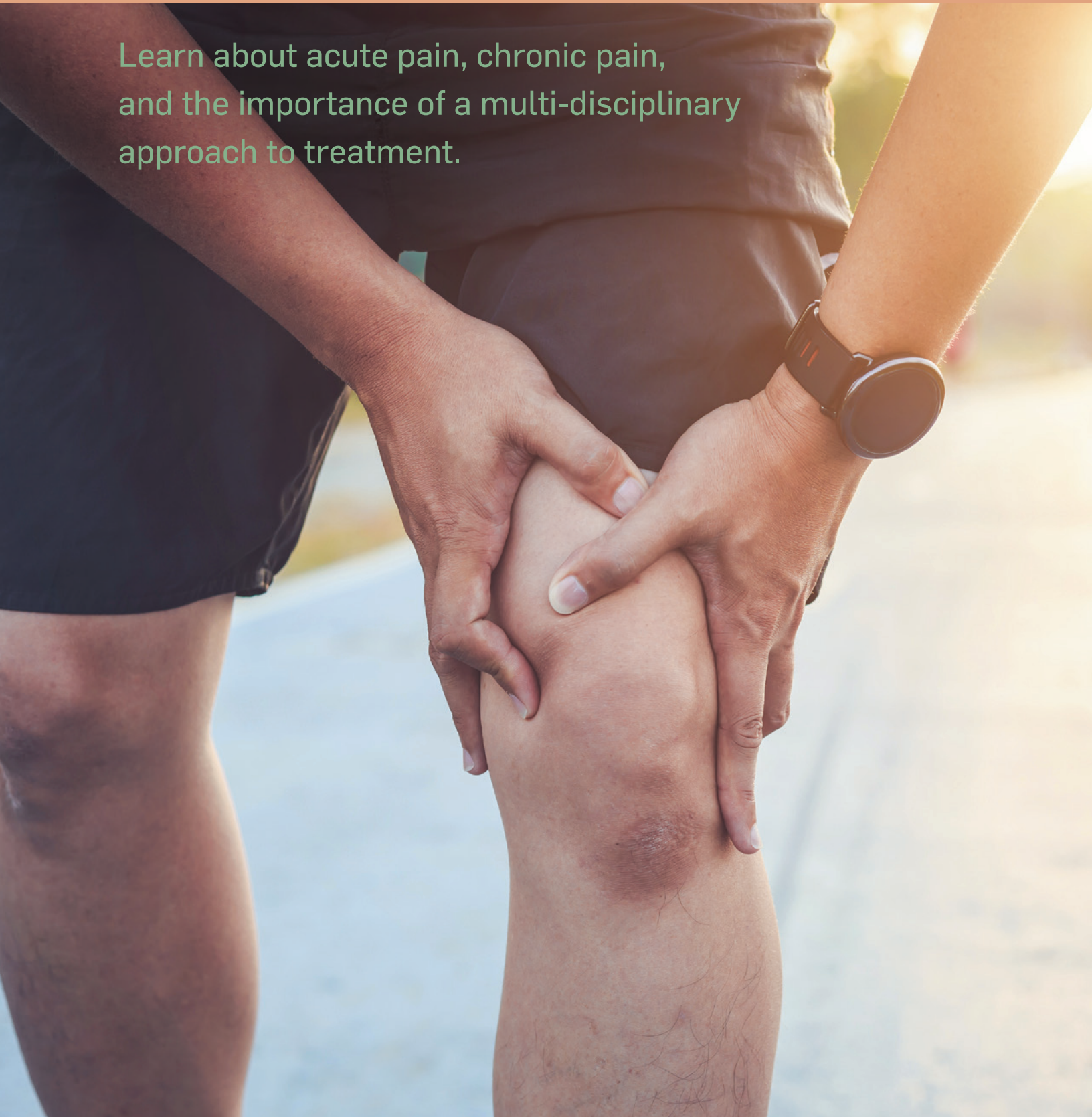


What is Pain?

Learn about acute pain, chronic pain, and the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to treatment.



What is Pain?

Pain is the body's response to let you know that something is wrong. We often think of the source of pain as a physical one, but did you know that all pain is triggered by your brain?

Small parts of the nervous system all over the body, called **nociceptors**, send signals back to your brain. Unlike other nerve cells, nociceptors only transmit information if something is causing, or threatening to cause damage.

Acute Pain

Acute pain happens quickly. It's a danger signal from your brain. For example: sand blows into your eyes, and you react immediately. The physical reaction is triggered by a pain response from the body to alert you it needs to be stopped — that sand has to get out of your eyes.

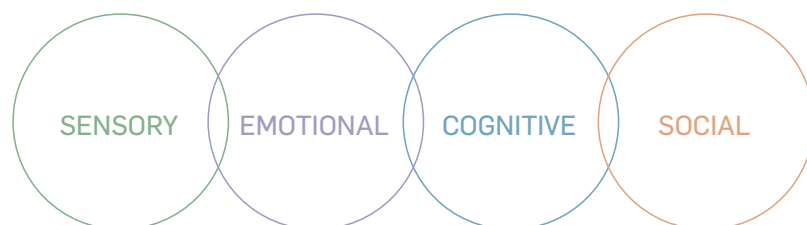
It's possible that acute pain can last long enough to disrupt your life. Pain from an injury or surgery may affect your daily functionality and productivity for weeks, or even months.

What Makes Pain Last?

The brain has many areas that are associated with pain, aligned with the different parts of the pain experience. Neuropathic pain is affected by many factors: sensory (physical and nerve-related), emotional, cognitive (behavioral), and social.

Individual circumstances affect the levels of pain that trigger nociceptors. Pain may be due to chemicals released by the body under certain conditions, or from damage to cells, which can make pain thresholds incredibly low, so even a simple touch is painful.

Pain is affected by many factors:



Chronic Pain

Pain that lasts more than 3-6 months is considered chronic. The pain that remains is because the brain — your nervous system — is still sending pain messages, even when the physical source is healed.

These messages from the brain contribute to what we call **pain behaviors**. They may include how you hold yourself physically, how you move or behave to compensate for pain, and the ways your brain unintentionally lets pain affect your life. But, if pain triggers a behavior, it can be changed or conditioned, like other behaviors.

How Does Chronic Pain Affect Your Life?



Your
Emotions

We often say that pain is an emotion. Think about it; there is no way to “diagnose” pain, as it cannot be seen — you must tell your doctor it’s present. Anxiety and Depression are common side effects of chronic pain, but they don’t have to be debilitating. You can learn to anticipate the triggers from these conditions, and reduce their effects on your life.

Your
Functionality

When you have chronic pain, you often can’t do the things you used to do, or enjoy life in the same way. The burden of pain affects your outlook and your relationships, too. It can even be a barrier to the treatment of other conditions. Pain itself doesn’t restrict body movement, so there are many opportunities to increase functionality, even with pain.

Chronic pain patients’ biological factors may also influence their psychological states. For example, chronic pain is closely associated with depression. Psychological factors can also influence the autonomic nervous system, hormone production, brain structure and processes.

Multidisciplinary Care for Pain

The US Department of Health and Human Services agrees that a “multidisciplinary approach to chronic pain that focuses on the patient’s medical condition, co-morbidities, and various aspects of care” is critical. Multidisciplinary care addresses the sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social components of pain.

In pain management, we don't treat the pain — we treat the **person** who has the pain.

Goals for Managing Chronic Pain

Synovation focuses on three goals of care in its multidisciplinary approach to your chronic pain:

1

Medication Minimization and Stabilization

Using medications as a tool during healing is typical, but it's important to plan to reduce your reliance on medications to stop use before it becomes difficult for your body and brain to do so.

2

Maximizing Your Functional Capacity

This is Synovation's primary goal of treatment. Pain can be debilitating and change your life in ways you'd never expect. You need to return to what you love doing in your daily life; the goals YOU set with your providers.

3

Minimizing Your Pain

A thorough evaluation of how your chronic pain has developed, how long you've been experiencing it, and exploring various options will determine the unique path for reducing pain that's best for you — and one that you alone control.



The Importance of Early Intervention

Don't wait to address your pain! Chronic pain is the number one cause of long term disability. By the time it's defined as chronic, your brain has been weaving together behaviors that compensate for your situation instead of improving it. The sooner you start, the easier those behaviors are to break and replace with better strategies.