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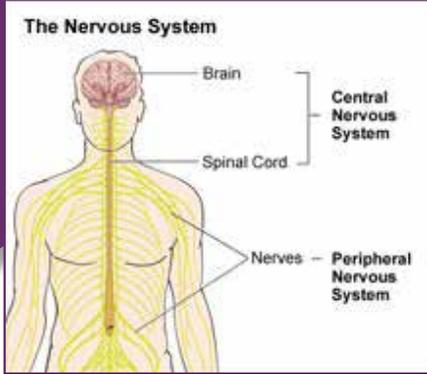
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Types of PAIN

Doctors recognize that their patients can experience different types of pain. Everyone is familiar with acute pain. This is pain that happens suddenly and eventually subsides and disappears. Chronic pain does not go away. In fact, it can last for so long that it can restructure the nervous system carrying the pain signals. Most medical doctors recognize chronic pain as pain that lasts for longer than three to six months.

Pain can be further divided into types. Nociceptive pain is pain that occurs from an impact on the sensory system of the

skin. For instance, the pain that can come from your thumb being hit by a hammer. Neuropathic pain is pain that originates in the nerves. Neuropathic pain can originate from a traumatic injury to a spinal nerve or a toxic injury to peripheral nerves in the arms or legs.

Centralized pain is pain that is increased by a person's central nervous system. For instance, the spinal cord nerves where the pain enters from a peripheral area can become sensitized to the continuous pain signal from an area of the body that suffered tissue damage. The spinal cord nerves will then increase the pain signal (up-regulates the signal) as the pain signal travels up the spinal cord to the brain. Once the brain receives the pain signal, the signal is routed to the area of the brain corresponding to the area of the body from which the pain signal was received. The brain then sends a reaction signal back down to the area of the body where the pain signal originated. Medical research has shown that the area of the brain receiving an increased pain signal can change over time. Persons with this condition feel pain and react painfully to sensations that would not cause others to feel or react with pain. A person with centralized pain has a damaged nervous system that outlasts the original tissue injury.

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, often called Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, or RSD, can occur when someone's brain has changed due to an injury to their arm or leg. The affected limb can become painful, swollen, and weak. Over time, the affected area becomes dissipated and may become useless. Signs of this condition include a shiny appearance of the skin, the loss of hair on the affected limb, and painful sensations from a slight touch of the affected area.

Effects of chronic pain

Chronic pain can be disabling. It is a difficult condition to treat. People with chronic pain often suffer from depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders. These problems can further exacerbate their pain condition and may require separate treatment. Chronic pain can also limit a person's physical activity and social life due to fear of exacerbating his or her pain. Moderation and avoidance of aggravating activities is one of the primary treatments and can result in a dramatic change in lifestyle, family responsibilities, and job status. Active persons have a particularly difficult time accepting the new limitations in their life.

Treating chronic pain

There are several treatments for chronic pain:

■ **Opioids**—Doctors routinely prescribe medication such as opioids (oxycodone, fentanyl), or opioids combined with other pain medication such as acetaminophen. Although opioids are often effective in treating chronic pain, they do have potential side effects, such as nausea, drowsiness, sleep-disorder breathing, and other bodily dysfunction. Opioids can lead to physical dependency. If opioids are

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Types of PAIN (continued from front)

taken regularly for chronic pain, a doctor should monitor closely for signs of pain medication complications and addiction.

■ **Physical therapy**—Another way of treating chronic pain is physical therapy. However, due to pain being a subjective experience, this treatment may not work for everyone who suffers from chronic pain.

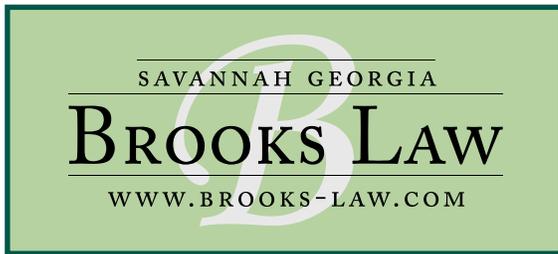
■ **Topical analgesics**—This type of treatment is generally applied to the skin using creams, lotions, or patches and can be purchased over the counter. Topical analgesics work in different ways, depending on their active ingredients.

■ **Pain management**—This is the branch of medicine employing a disciplinary approach to pain relief and improvement in the quality of life for a chronic pain sufferer. Pain management includes medical practitioners, occupational therapists, or nurse practitioners who have developed techniques such as trigger-point

injections to help sufferers. Psychological treatments, including cognitive behavioral therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy, have been shown effective in reducing pain and improving quality of life in those who suffer from chronic pain.

Dealing with chronic pain

According to a survey conducted by the American Pain Society, it takes most people about six months to get their pain diagnosed and under control. The key to managing chronic pain is to find a strategy that works best for the sufferer. Your primary care physician should be the main source of information, and talk with others who have had similar experiences with chronic pain. Researching and finding out what treatments others have tried can be a source of information and helpful when consulting with your treating physician. Being proactive about your chronic pain is the key to getting the pain under control.



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Don't let a roadside emergency turn into a roadside tragedy

There are many reasons that you might want to pull to the side of the road, especially on a summer road trip—to stretch your legs, make a phone call, or perhaps you aren't feeling well or your vehicle breaks down. Pulling to the shoulder of the road should be reserved for emergency situations only. It puts drivers and passengers, especially someone who exits the vehicle, in a perilous situation, so make phone calls and stretch your legs at a rest stop.

If you do have an emergency that leaves you stranded on the side of the road, put your hazard lights on, pull over as far as you can, and stay in your vehicle. Do not attempt to change a tire on the side of a busy highway. If at all possible, call a roadside assistance service.

According to AAA, pedestrians struck on the shoulder of a highway are often hit by inattentive, impaired, or drowsy drivers.

If you do have an emergency that leaves you stranded on the side of the road, put your hazard lights on, pull over as far as you can, and stay in your vehicle.

