



## Accurate Clinic

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## Accurate Education

Preventing Acute Pain  
Developing into Chronic

Acute Pain Transition  
to Chronic Pain

## Preventing Acute Pain from Developing into Chronic Pain

When one experiences an injury, surgical or traumatic, the body's pain system is activated. When this acute pain (< 3 months duration) is not managed properly, the nervous system can become "sensitized"—meaning it becomes overly reactive and continues sending pain signals sometimes even even after the injury has healed. This is how acute pain can transform into chronic pain that lasts months or years.

***Early treatment of acute pain can significantly reduce the risk of developing chronic pain.***

### **Pain Sensitization - It works on two levels:**

- 1. At the injury site (Peripheral Sensitization):** The nerves near the injury become extra sensitive, causing increased pain in that area. One may notice the injured area feels more sensitive to pain than expected, or that even light touch causes discomfort.
- 2. In the brain and spinal cord (Central Sensitization):** If pain signals continue for too long, the central nervous system can magnify the pain or cause the pain to spread beyond the original injury and persist even after the original injury heals.

### **Warning signs that sensitization may be developing:**

1. Pain that seems out of proportion to the injury
2. Pain from things that shouldn't hurt (like light touch or brushing against clothing)
3. Pain spreading to areas beyond the original injury
4. Increased sensitivity to light, sound or temperature
5. Ongoing pain despite injured tissue healing

### **Prevention:**

#### **Step 1: Use Ice Therapy in the First 48 Hours**

Apply cold packs to the injured area for 10–20 minutes every 2 hours during the first 48 hours. This reduces inflammation and suppresses nerve activity. Always wrap ice in a towel to protect the skin.

#### **Step 2: Stay Active Within Safe Limits**

Absolute rest can actually worsen pain over time. Gentle movement and gradual return to activity — as guided by one's healthcare provider — helps prevent the nervous system from becoming overly sensitive.

#### **Step 3: Prioritize Sleep**

Poor sleep increases pain sensitivity. Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep per night —managing nighttime pain is important for recovery.

#### **Step 4: Manage Stress and Anxiety**

Stress and worrying about pain can actually amplify pain signals in the brain. *Consider:*

- Deep breathing exercises (10–20 minutes daily)
- Meditation or mindfulness and relaxation apps
- Gentle yoga, Tai Chi or stretching
- Talking to a clinician if anxiety is significant

## **MEDICATIONS**

1. **NSAIDs** - Anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs - ibuprofen, meloxicam etc.) are common first line choices for acute pain. While NSAIDs are helpful for short-term use, using them for more than 7–10 days may actually interfere with the body's healing processes by suppressing resolution of inflammation.

## 2. TOPICAL MEDICATIONS

Many over-the-counter (OTC) options are effective and their use should be emphasized. They need to be applied directly to the painful area but avoided over broken skin or rashes.

### • Lidocaine Patches, Gels and Creams (Rx and OTC))

1. Lidocaine numbs the nerves in the skin and tissues beneath the patch
2. It also works on how nerves process pain signals and may reduce peripheral sensitization
3. Patches can be cut to fit the painful area and can be applied for up to 12 hours per day

### • Capsaicin Cream

1. Made from chili peppers, it initially activates then desensitizes pain receptors over time
2. Apply 3–4 times daily; It takes 1–2 weeks of regular use to see full benefit
3. Initially it causes a burning or warming sensation but this decreases with continued use
4. Wash hands after use and avoid contact with eyes and mucous membranes.

## 3. Suzetrigine (Journavx™)

A new, FDA-approved **non-opioid** medication for moderate-to-severe acute pain in adults. It blocks pain signals at the site of injury before they reach the brain. Journavx offers pain relief comparable to opioids.

1. Dosing: One dose of 100 mg to start, then 50 mg every 12 hours
2. Journavx can be taken for up to 14 days or until pain resolves
3. It works best when started within 24–48 hours of injury or surgery
4. Journavx *does not cause the drowsiness, confusion or addiction risk.*

## 4. Gabapentinoids (Gabapentin/Neurontin, Pregabalin/Lyrica)

These medications suppress nerve signals and help prevent acute pain from becoming chronic.

## 5. Opioids

Current trends avoid opioids but they may be necessary to adequately control pain. Preferred opioids include: buprenorphine (Butrans patches, Belbuca strips), tramadol, Nucynta (tapentadol), levorphanol and Norco. Their use should be limited and only engaged when non-opioid options are inadequate.

## NUTRACEUTICALS AND SUPPLEMENTS

*Each of these compounds offers benefits for reducing peripheral and central sensitization.*

### 1. Omega-3 Fatty Acids (EPA and DHA; Fish Oil)

- These Omega 3's are powerful anti-inflammatories but they also help the body produce natural anti-inflammatory compounds called "resolvins" that promote healing gradually over several weeks
- *Recommended dose:* 1–3 grams daily with a fatty meal

### 2. Curcumin (Turmeric Extract)

- Another powerful natural anti-inflammatory compound
- Curcumin requires "bioavailable" formulations for absorption. ("Phytosomal" formulations are preferred)
- *Recommended dose:* 500–1,000 mg daily for 8–16 weeks

### 3. Palmitoylethanolamide (PEA)

- A natural compound that reduces pain and inflammation in multiple ways to reduce sensitization
- PEA works gradually over several weeks
- PEA works synergistically when combined with other nutraceuticals
- *Recommended dose:* 600 mg twice daily for 8–16 weeks

### 4. Magnesium (L-Threonate)

- Suppress overactive nerve signaling to reduce peripheral and central sensitization
- Magnesium may also help with sleep and muscle relaxation
- Magnesium L-Threonate form is preferred (or glycinate if not affordable)
- Can cause loose stools at higher doses
- Avoid with kidney disease
- *Recommended dose:* 400–600 mg daily for 8–16 weeks

### 5. N-Acetylcysteine (NAC)

- A powerful antioxidant that reduces oxidative stress and inflammation to suppress central sensitization
- Take on an empty stomach for best absorption (it has a sulfur smell that some find unpleasant)
- *Recommended dose:* 600–1,200 mg daily for 8–16 weeks