

PAIN MANAGEMENT FOR VETERANS: **A Discussion Guide for Patients** **and Caregivers**



Well after service has ended, many veterans continue to face pain. Instances of acute pain combined with other factors like addiction or mental health, present unique challenges for veterans seeking relief, especially amid a culture that can stigmatize both and make access to pain treatment options difficult.

This guide is meant to help veterans and caregivers advocate with their health care providers for new pathways to effective pain management, including non-opioid options, and the support and care they deserve.

Severe pain was reported 40% more frequently among veterans than civilians.



Be Ready for Appointments

Finding the right care starts well before your visit.

Consider these tips:

- Record specific details of your pain's intensity, location, and effects on your life.
- Bring a list of current and past medications, imaging, and lab results, noting side effects and effectiveness of medications.
- Be prepared to discuss how service has affected your physical and mental health.



Advocate for Support

Being clear about your specific needs and concerns can help your provider best support you.

Ask your doctor:

- Can we make a plan for tracking my pain over time and coordinating decisions with my care team?
- How do my mental health and experiences with pain affect one another? How do we manage both?
- [If not at a Veterans Affairs provider] Are there pain management specialists in this practice or another that are familiar with caring for veterans?



Know Your Options

Opioids may not be the answer to everyone's pain, especially if addiction is a concern.

Ask your doctor:

- What risks should I be aware of with opioid use?
- Are there non-addictive, non-opioid options with the same effectiveness?
- What other resources can you provide for veterans' physical and mental health?



**FAMILIES,
ADDICTION &
MENTAL HEALTH**
N E T W O R K

Everyone experiencing pain deserves access to the same care and treatments that can bring relief. Talk to your doctor about whether a new non-opioid acute pain management option is right for you or your loved one. Pain management is a journey - not every treatment works right away, and your needs may change over time. Keep the conversation open.

<https://www.families-network.org/take-control-of-pain/>