

Central Sensitization

Central sensitization is a condition of your central nervous system that can lead to chronic pain. Changes happen at pain receptor sites in your spinal cord and brain. You become more sensitive to pain. Your body may react and still feel pain after an injury has healed.

Causes

History of:

- Injuries to the nerves outside of your brain and spinal cord
- Chronic pain
- Conditions of the nervous system
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Trauma

Symptoms

There are two main symptoms:

- **Allodynia:** what would feel like normal or light touch feels painful.
- **Hyperalgesia:** what would feel painful, or a simple bump, that feels more painful than you would expect.

The nervous system controls your sense of pain and emotions. You may have trouble sleeping and feel tired when it is stuck in a state of reacting. You may also feel depressed and anxious.

Treatment Plan

Treatment is focused on breaking the pain cycle and retraining your brain. We use:

- Medicines
- Physical therapy
- Exercise
- Health psychologist

A health psychologist can help you learn ways to cope with stress. Options may include learning how to relax and desensitization therapy.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2024. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8119.