

# 1

# Pain is always real



**Pain Facts 1/9**  
Pain is always real

Pain can be complicated.

Maybe you've heard stories about people with serious injuries who only feel pain after they're out of danger? Like the footballer who breaks a jaw during the match and doesn't feel a thing. Or someone who escapes a fire and only realises once they're safe how badly they've been burned.



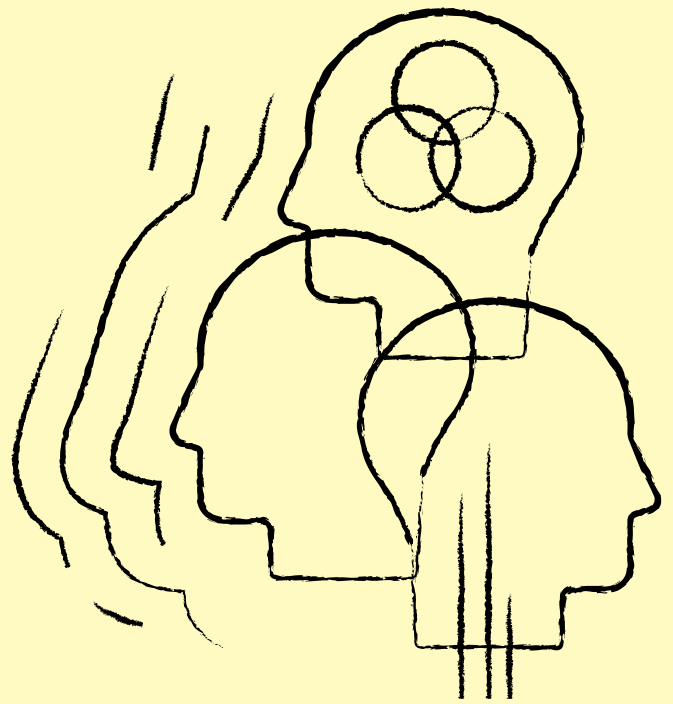
The opposite can also happen.

People with severe and disabling chronic back pain have been found to have almost identical MRIs to people the same age without back pain. And you've probably heard about phantom limb pain – around 70% of people who lose a limb feel like it's still there; some of them going as far as to feel excruciating pain.

There's been plenty of research into pain and our understanding of it has changed a lot over the last few decades.

Phantom limb pain - 70% of people who lose a limb feel like it's still there

Thanks to pain science, we now know that:



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● Pain is a protective response that makes you do (or not do) something to protect the painful body part

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● Pain is caused by a complex interaction of biological, psychological and social factors

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● The longer the pain goes on, the more sensitive your nerves become – making your whole system better at producing pain

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● It may start out as a physical injury, but these other social and psychological factors can prolong the pain long after the injury has healed

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● The only way to know when someone is in pain is if they tell you

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● Things that threaten us can cause the pain to continue or get worse

– Threats can come from feelings like anxiety, stress or even unhappiness

– Threats can come from places that feel unsafe

– Threats can come from foods that increase gut inflammation

– Threats can come from people who make us feel bad or cut us down.

Informed clinicians (like doctors, nurses, physios and others) who understand pain science will never decide that your pain is not real because they can't see an injury. Instead they'll help you make sense of your pain, so you can make informed decisions about your care and together develop a recovery plan.

Because pain can be complicated. But it is always, always real.

This fact sheet is not specific medical advice. But we really hope that, once you've read it, you'll understand more about pain and the latest ways of managing it.

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