

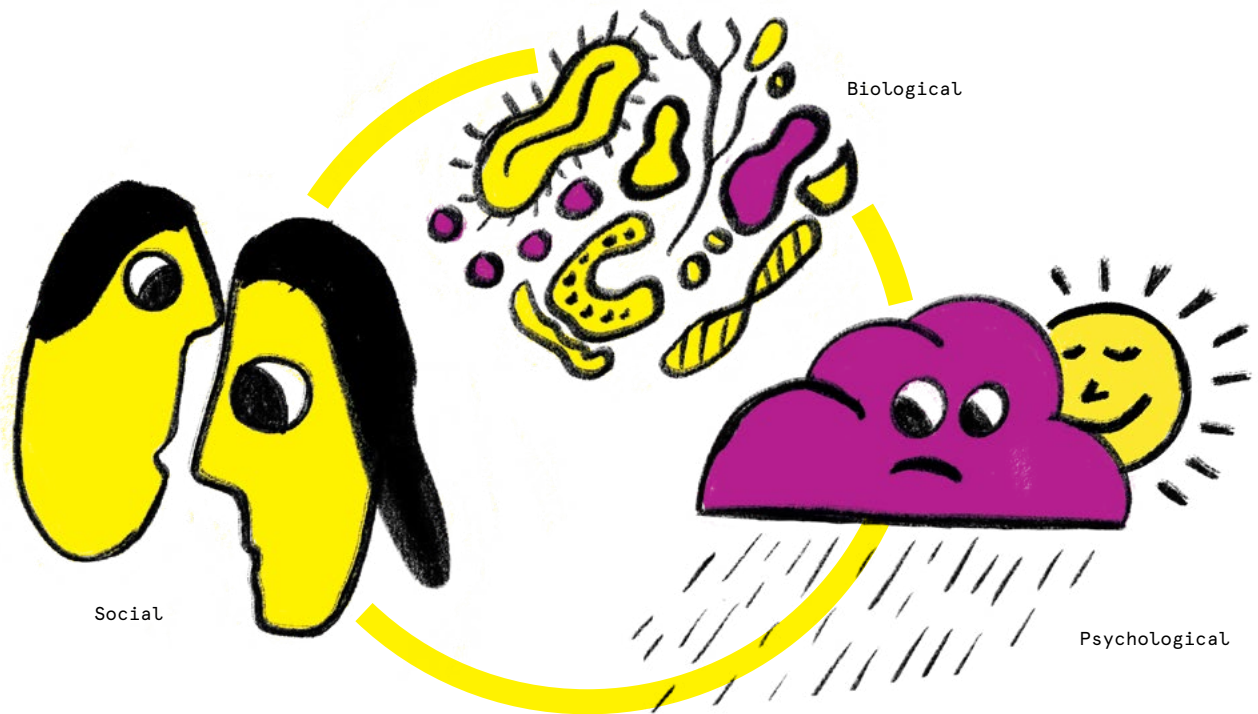
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Pain depends on context



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Pain depends on context

Pain is influenced by biological, social and psychological factors.



Social factors include things like other people, your work and things you see and hear. While **psychological** ones are divided into cognitive and affective aspects.

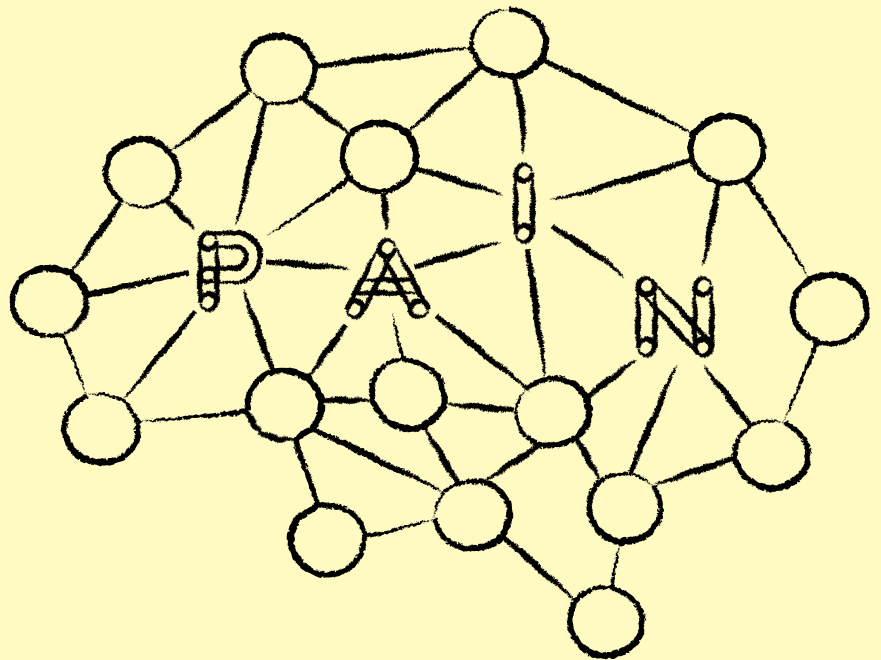
Cognitive aspects include your understanding and beliefs and how you think about things. So these can include your ideas about the causes of your pain, whether you believe your diagnosis is correct, how much you trust your health care practitioner, and how you feel about your body's physical state now and in the future.

Affective aspects are the feelings and emotions that accompany your injury or pain condition. These might be feeling upset in general, depression, stress, anxiety, anger or frustration.

All together these factors and aspects form the context of your pain. They're also a powerful influence on the pain you experience.

For example, experiments have shown that pain caused by a hot stimulus is usually more intense when it's accompanied by a red light rather than a blue light – because we unconsciously associate red with danger. Also, pain caused by a laser is more intense when participants are tricked into thinking the part of the skin being stimulated is thinner than usual – because we unconsciously increase protection for body parts we think are vulnerable.

Thanks to pain science, we now know that:



● Context is really important

● Context can affect pain intensity, duration and variability

This is great news because it means by working to change situations or your responses to them, you'll be well on your way to recovery.

● Worrying all the time that something might be really wrong and interpreting increases in pain as a sign of potential catastrophe, have both been shown to make pain worse and make it last longer

● Understanding the impact of context on your pain can help you work towards lessening that impact – understanding is power

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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