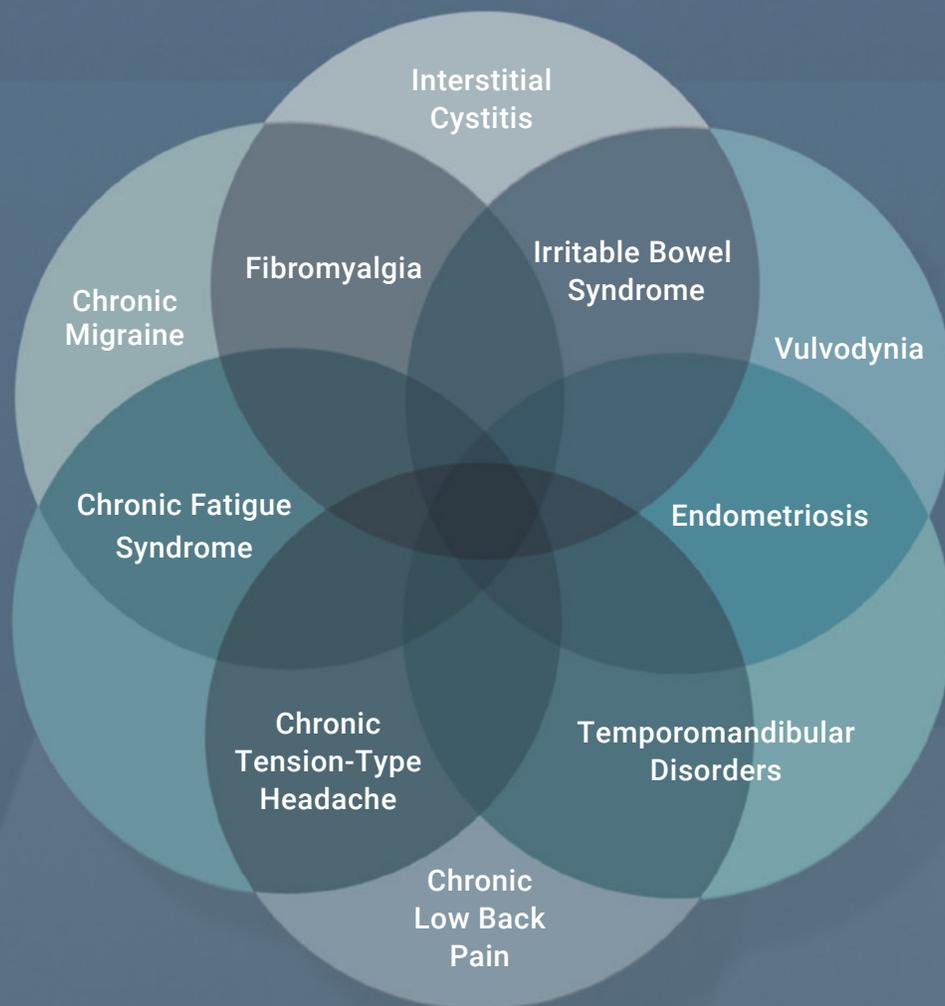


What are (COPCs) Chronic Overlapping Pain Conditions?

COPCs are a group of **10 pain conditions** that occur together and affect many areas of the body. Most COPCs share a type of pain called **central pain** which is a problem with how the brain processes pain.

The 10 COPCs include, but should not be limited to the ones featured below.



What are the different types of pain and where do I fit in?

COPCs mostly result from something called **central pain**; however, different types of pain can occur at the same time. Below are some examples:

Nociceptive: Pain caused by damaged tissue (e.g., sprained ankle, rheumatoid arthritis, cancer pain)

Neuropathic: Pain caused by damaged nerves (e.g., sciatica, diabetic neuropathy)

Central: Pain caused by how our brain produces the experience of pain (e.g., fibromyalgia, migraine headaches, IBS)

To put it all together, if you have central pain, your day-to-day symptoms may include these five elements, which can be remembered by the acronym "SPACE".

Sleep

Non-restorative sleep

Pain

Pain that is wide-spread all over your body

Affect

Anxiety, depressed mood, irritability

Cognition

Problems with memory, concentration, and thinking

Energy

Feeling mentally and physically exhausted



Do I have central pain?

You may have central pain if you check some or all of these boxes:

- I feel pain in several areas of my body at the same or different times. It may be constant or it may come and go.
- I experience pain in response to things that aren't normally painful, such as soft touch or giving or receiving a hug.
- I am extremely sensitive to noises, touch, or smells such as bright lights, certain types of clothing, or perfumes.
- I am often tired, have mood changes, unrefreshing sleep, and struggle with thinking, concentration, or memory.

What can I do about my central pain?

In addition to working with your doctor, there are **tools that you can start using**, on your own, to improve your day-to-day SPACE symptoms (sleep, pain, action, concentration, and energy) by using “self-management” or specific proactive coping to address symptoms.

Working on SPACE-related symptoms by using self-management approaches is a recommendation for the treatment of chronic pain made by the Institute of Medicine, Center for Disease Control, and the National Institute of Health’s National Pain Strategy.

See our toolkit for these specific readings.

COPC Toolkit

Painguide (painguide.com) is a free resource that works directly to ERASE SPACE-related symptoms. Follow the link to find:

- Self-care Tools
- Exercise
- Nutrition Recommendations
- Acupressure Guide
- Relaxation
- Meditation Tools
- More Pain Education
- Sleep Suggestions



Where to start.

Fortunately, there are self-management strategies you can use to ERASE SPACE-related symptoms.

Emotions

Lifting your mood can make a big difference in how you feel day-to-day. In fact, studies show that as depression and anxiety lessen, pain becomes much easier to manage.

Tip: Scheduling pleasant activities, particularly those that have meaning and value can help lift your mood over time.

Reflections

Our **reactions to pain** and day-to-day thoughts about pain can affect how we feel physically. Stress increases muscle tension and can make pain worse. We can learn to better control both thoughts about pain and stress to help.

Tip: Deep breathing, muscle relaxation exercises, mindfulness, and meditation are widely available and help with relaxation. See our toolkit for more suggestions.

Keeping our mind active and engaged can fight “pain fog” and also distract from pain.

Tip: Learn something new, read, work a puzzle or sudoku.



Actions

Moving and getting exercise is key for managing pain. Regular low-impact or aerobic exercise improves function, energy levels, mood, and overall well-being.

Tip: Walking, tai chi, and aerobic exercise can be done at home, a gym, or in formal classes. Swimming or aquatic exercise can be low-impact on the joints.

Tip: Start slow, and do not increase your activity by more than 5% at a time. Muscle soreness happens when you start to move again, and is completely normal.

Good nutrition is vital to our health and well-being. What we eat can affect our energy, mood, and sometimes our pain. You may have noticed that certain foods make your symptoms worse.

Tip: Specific recommendations for pain often include anti-inflammatory diets and can be found in our toolkit section and on the patient advocacy websites for COPCs we list in the Toolkit above.

Sleep

Improving your sleep habits can help restore energy and improve mood.

Tip: Reduce bedroom distractions, such as watching TV or handling your cellphone in bed. Choose a regular bedtime and waketime and avoid naps during the day to re-set your body clock, build up your ‘tiredness,’ and prepare your body for sleep.

Environment

Pain is often experienced in a social context. Others may ask about your pain and you may communicate your discomfort to others.

Tip: Assertive communication generally works best when it comes to pain. Let others know what you need but don't let others take away all of your responsibilities or sense of accomplishment.



Would you like to know more?

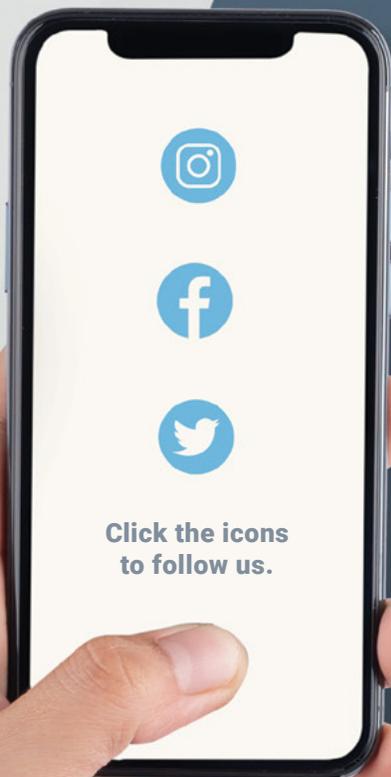
For links to specific tools to help **ERASE SPACE-related symptoms**, an in-depth look at COPCs and central pain, and connections to organizations that can help you learn more about specific pain conditions you can visit:

Advocacy Groups

- National Vulvodynia Association (nva.org)
- Temporomandibular Association (tmj.org)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome Network (theibsnetwork.org)
- Interstitial Cystitis Association (ichelp.org)
- National Fibromyalgia Association (fmaware.org)
- Endometriosis Association (endometriosisassn.org)
- American Migraine Foundation (americanmigrainefoundation.org)
- American Chronic Pain Association (theacpa.org)

Education

- **Painguide is a free resource that works directly on helping erase SPACE-related symptoms.** painguide.com
- **An expert walkthrough on central pain:**
youtube.com/watch?v=B0EhNajqkDU
- **National Institute of Health's National Pain Strategy:**
iproc.nih.gov/national-pain-strategy-overview/national-pain-strategy-report
- **Institute of Medicine Report, "Relieving Pain in America":**
aspmn.org/documents/IOMHighlightsrevised081011.pdf
- **Chronic Pain Research Alliance report on COPCs:**
chronicpainresearch.org/public/CPRA_WhitePaper_2015-FINAL-Digital.pdf
- **Anti-inflammatory diets:**
drweil.com/diet-nutrition/anti-inflammatory-diet-pyramid/dr-weils-anti-inflammatory-diet/
- **Osher Center for Integrative Medicine website:**
vanderbilthealth.com/service-line/osher-center-integrative-medicine



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The concepts of "SPACE" and "ERASE-SPACE" originated at the University of Michigan in the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center, Ann Arbor, MI.