

Why and How Do We Feel Pain

If one asked you to try to remember the last time you endured a situation that resulted in any kind of physical discomfort, you will probably attempt to describe the uncomfortable feeling of pain. Although this is not a memory you would like to recall, you should be familiar with the reasons that led your body experience that kind of distress and why you felt compelled to release the pain by performing another physical reaction, like screaming or crying.

According to one official definition, published by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP), pain is "an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage." Whether or not you are currently under any kind of pain treatment, because you tried, for example, to remove a hot pan from the oven without wearing your protection gloves or you accidentally cut your skin with a razor during showering, pain is not an issue you can simply ignore. Most importantly, by reading the pain definition above, you can understand that pain is not easily described or categorized, as it constitutes a rather subjective and complicated issue. Even when pain is discussed by physicians and research experts, finding one definition that could serve all purposes is challenging. Since stories and opinions tend to be rather subjective in nature as different people have reported similar incidents of pain by using a variety adjectives depending on their personal experiences and knowledge, it is probably wise to consider pain as "what is expressed by the person suffering." This can be considered a rather generic, but nevertheless commonly accepted explanation of what pain is.

In fact, the way we experience pain is a very complicated procedure performed by our neural system. The feeling of pain can be caused by the heat, the pressure or the chemical substances our tissues release when they are injured. Different factors influence the cells of our neural system and their reaction is reported as cases associated with pain. But, one should keep in mind that pain can be as a rather useful tool in many occasions. Since pain acts as a warning mechanism that our body uses to signify the fact that we are in danger or we have experienced some kind of injury, it provides us with the necessary time to react and reduce the harmful stimulator. On the other hand, pain can be caused by tissue damage -like joint inflammation known as coxitis or any kind of tumor- that we cannot avoid by performing a simple action, like, for example, releasing the hot pan we touched.

People have to deal today with two kinds of pain incidents. The first is described as a sharp pain that appears suddenly and feels almost like a stab or a sting. Usually this kind of pain has a short duration and is gradually reduced on its own or because of adequate medical treatment. The second kind of pain is known as chronic pain. That is because it continues to resurface regardless of the treatment used and is characterized by a long and usually unknown duration.

Overcoming occurrences of pain is very important for medical scientists, who have researched extensively and produced a variety of pain relievers in their effort to reduce the severity and the duration of such incidents. If a medicine or a treatment does not help the suffering party deal with pain, there is a great variety of different methods that can be used and one must always ask for a change in his/her treatment in order to find the most effective method in fighting the cause of pain. Talking to an expert, like a doctor, one can find the appropriate drug and/or treatment to overcome pain. A useful idea is to keep a record of the drug's use and outcomes. By sharing this personal journal with a doctor it is possible to assist in the monitoring of the selected treatment's progress and tremendously contributing in successfully defeating pain.

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