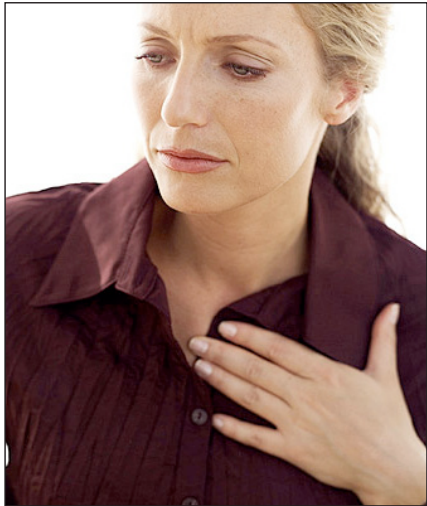


6 Types of Pain You Shouldn't Ignore



How do you know when the pain you're feeling is just ordinary, run-of-the-mill achiness or something much more serious that warrants medical attention? Make no mistake: Ignoring certain types of pain can have dire consequences. After all, if you miss the warnings of heart attack, you risk sudden death. That's why you should be aware of these six pain symptoms and be ready to act with a pain management plan for each situation.

Chest Pain

Of all the types of pain, chest pain is the most worrisome. Neil Kirschen, MD, medical director of the Pain Management Center of Long Island in Rockville Centre, N.Y., says the symptoms that require emergency attention include a heavy feeling like an elephant is standing on your chest, pain radiating to the jaw or arms, difficulty getting air, and an overwhelming feeling of gloom.

There are instances of less serious chest pain symptoms: "If you perform physical activity and later experience chest pain where you can actually touch the tight muscle causing it, then you may consider a musculoskeletal origin of the pain," says Dr. Kirschen. However, due to the seriousness of chest pain, it makes sense to err on the side of caution.

Digestive Issues

Most of us experience run-of-the-mill digestive pain symptoms from time to time. These can include health problems such as nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, and heartburn. While these usually don't warrant a trip to the doctor, one symptom that does require immediate action is severe abdominal pain. "That kind of pain is often a sign of a serious abdominal health problem such as appendicitis, gallbladder disease, stomach or bowel disorders,

or pancreatitis," says Jianguo Cheng, MD, PhD, director of the Cleveland Clinic Pain Medicine Fellowship Program. "Most acute abdominal pain needs immediate medical attention, either in the ER or doctor's office. Abdominal wall pain due to trauma or surgery also frequently requires thorough medical evaluation and aggressive treatment," Dr. Cheng adds.

Painful Urination

There's no room for ambiguity here: If you experience pain when urinating, call your doctor for an appointment. And if your pain symptoms include blood in your urine, fever, or back pain, get immediate attention. "Painful urination often is related to urinary tract infection, which is more common in women than in men," says Cheng. "Another common cause is a kidney stone or bladder stone."

Back Pain

It can be hard to know when to take back pain seriously because it's one of the most common types of pain and a health problem that many people experience as they get older. As a result, developing a management plan for back pain can be complex. Cheng suggests seeing your doctor if the back pain is moderate to severe or lasts for two weeks or more. "Patients with back pain should also seek medical care if the back pain is associated with numbness or weakness of the leg," he says. "In cases of back pain with bowel and/or bladder dysfunction, immediate medical care is required, and patients should go to the ER or doctor's office with no delay. Compression of the nerves serving these functions may be the cause, and the outcomes are often related directly to the duration of the compression."

Severe Headache

When it comes to common health problems, headache is certainly at or near the top of the list. When headache pain becomes severe, though, the outcome can be quite serious. "The 'worst headache of my life' should definitely be investigated," says Kirschen. "Headaches that are becoming more frequent, more intense, and [that are] unrelated to activity should be looked into. You want to make sure that a brain tumor doesn't exist, or a cerebral hemorrhage."