

## Working with Your Health Care Provider to Develop a Treatment Plan

Once you identify all of the factors that contribute to your individual pain condition, you can begin the process of working with your clinician to develop a comprehensive, personalized treatment plan. Numerous treatments are available to manage chronic pain and its related disorders; however, it can take some time and trial-and-error to find one or a combination that work best for you without producing intolerable side effects.

Some COPCs, such as fibromyalgia and migraine, have FDA-approved treatments, while no FDA-approved treatment options exist for other COPCs. Also, there are many drug and non-drug options that are used off-label to treat COPCs, specifically, and chronic pain, in general. Similarly, related conditions, such as sleep and mood disorders, can be managed with various treatment options, and many strategies exist to combat other factors at play, such as fatigue, social isolation and cognitive difficulties.

Essential to long-term improvement is setting small attainable goals that you will begin to work towards with treatment. This helps to measure your overall progress and improvement in function, as well as to provide motivation and hope.

For more information, please visit our website: [www.ChronicPainResearch.org](http://www.ChronicPainResearch.org)



# Chronic Overlapping Pain Conditions

### About the CPRA

The Chronic Pain Research Alliance (CPRA) exists to be a voice for people with COPCs. The CPRA is the first and only research-led advocacy effort working towards a future where COPCs patients will receive a timely diagnosis and comprehensive medical care, which includes the use of safe and effective treatments, informed by the latest and best scientific evidence. For meaningful change to occur in the lives of those with COPCs, the CPRA works in strategic collaboration with a number of invested stakeholders (see above figure).



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 **CHRONIC PAIN  
Research Alliance**

*Advancing Research – Changing Lives*

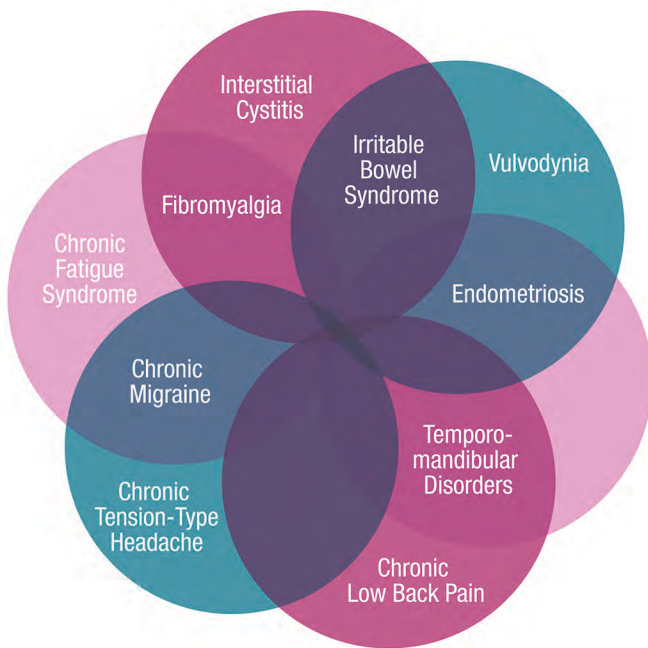
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## What are Chronic Overlapping Pain Conditions?

Chronic pain conditions that often occur together in the same person and share similar mechanisms of disease, particularly of the neurologic, immune and endocrine systems, have recently been termed by the National Institutes of Health as Chronic Overlapping Pain Conditions (COPCs, see figure below).

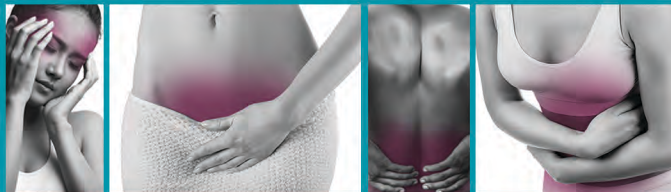
Not everyone who develops one of these conditions will go on to develop more, however many do, particularly women. The complexity of overlap is shown in the figure—any combination and number of conditions is possible. Some people develop multiple conditions around the same time and others develop them in succession over many years.



## How are COPCs Diagnosed?

Most COPCs are ‘diagnoses of exclusion,’ meaning that they are diagnosed after any known causes for the pain, such as infection or cancer, are ruled out. Due to a lack of awareness and training, misdiagnosis is common and many clinicians are unaware of the inter-relationship of these conditions.

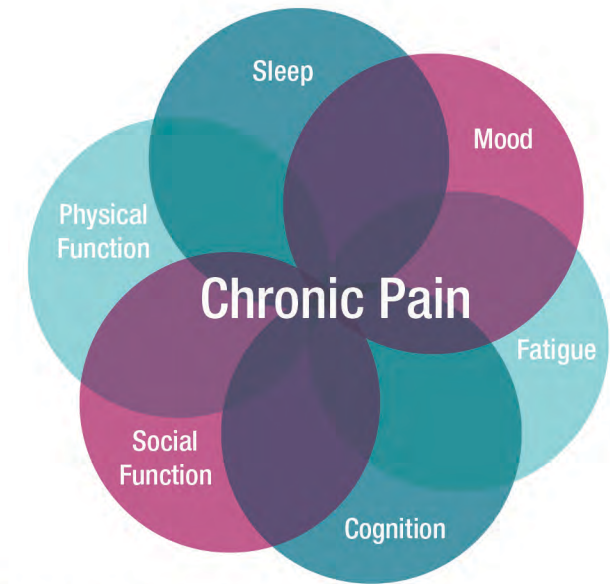
Because our health care system is organized by medical specialties that typically involve a body system/part, i.e., urologists treat bladder/kidney conditions while gynecologists treat reproductive tract disorders, many types of specialists care for COPCs patients.



For example, a woman with vulvodynia and irritable bowel syndrome may be treated by both a gynecologist and gastroenterologist.

There is no one medical specialty responsible for treating COPCs, however, it’s common for COPCs patients to be treated by health care providers who specialize in the management of chronic pain, such as neurologists and pain medicine specialists. Primary care providers also treat many people with these disorders.

It’s important for you to discuss all of your medical conditions with any health care provider you consult, even if you might not think they are related.



## Complexity of the Chronic Pain Experience

It’s common for COPCs patients to suffer from other chronic conditions, such as sleep or mood disorders. In some people, these conditions develop before chronic pain starts, and for others, they develop afterwards. Also, chronic pain has far-reaching impact, causing fatigue, cognitive difficulties, and varying degrees of physical, social and sexual dysfunction.

The interplay among these conditions and factors is complex and highly unique to each person. To develop an effective treatment plan, it’s essential to identify everything that plays a role in your individual pain condition. For example, a COPCs patient who has a sleep disorder and experiences depression will need a different treatment plan than another COPCs patient with anxiety, cognitive difficulties and fatigue.