

Physiotherapy and Pain

The most common reason for people seeing a Chartered Physiotherapist is pain. This can be of sudden onset resulting from an injury, for example, or commonly for no apparent reason. The problem with pain that 'just came on' is that it is very frustrating as we are unable to rationalise why it hurts and, therefore, what can be done to put it right.

Pain is a hugely complex issue and many people spend their working lives studying pain and how it affects the body. What we know is that pain is never 'simple'. In my field of work people present with all sorts of pain from spinal pain, arthritic pain and muscle and ligament sprains and strains.

As a physiotherapist my role is to assess each person individually to decide on where the pain is coming from, where the pain is being sent to and what the influencing factors are that can help or aggravate your pain. Pain that is sent away from the source is called referred pain and is very common. A typical example would be sciatica which is leg pain that refers from the low back. It may also be that there are no obvious movements that aggravate your pain and my role is to identify factors that are relevant such as lifestyle, posture or work environment.

Pain will also vary in intensity and where the pain is being felt but if it is not showing signs of improvement, over time and with pain killers or anti-inflammatory medication, a physiotherapy assessment could be beneficial in diagnosing accurately where the pain is coming from and being able to formulate an effective treatment programme. It could also benefit from knowing whether your particular condition is something that could respond to physiotherapy or not or whether you would need to be referred back to your doctor for further investigations.

