

Differences in Pain Perception

Between Sexes



Male



Female

- Men report lower pain severity in acute pain settings in lab experiments
- Experiments have shown **men's nervous systems can dampen pain signals** their body sends **more** than women can
 - Men are less sensitive to pain
 - Men have **higher pain thresholds**, so they **experience less pain** if they are given the **same pain stimulus** compared to women
- Hormonal impacts:
 - Testosterone protects against pain sensitivity
 - Studies show men on **chronic opioids** have **lower testosterone**. The low testosterone state makes these men **more sensitive to pain**.
- Pain coping strategies that are most commonly used by men:
 - Behavioral distraction (do an activity to ignore the pain)
- Pain is more common in females
- Hormonal impacts:
 - Low estrogen state can cause increased pain sensitivity
 - Lower androgen levels can cause increased pain
- Pain perception changes during the menstrual cycle**
 - Higher pain threshold during the follicular phase just after menses (high estrogen), so they experience less pain during this time
 - Increased sensitivity to pain right before periods** (low estrogen), so they experience more pain during this time
- Pain threshold increases throughout pregnancy**, and **SIGNIFICANTLY** right before delivery, so they experience less pain when giving birth
- Women on **birth control** have **decreased ability to dampen pain signals**, so they experience more pain compared to other women
- Pain coping strategies that are most commonly used by women :
 - Social support (talk with others about their pain)

