

Preventing and Managing Chronic Pain in Childhood: Implications Across the Life Course.

Taken from Dr. Tonya Palermo, PhD

Key Points:

1. Pain in childhood **matters**. Chronic pain is a common problem in children and adolescents, and can have a significant and lasting impact on functioning and health into **adulthood**.
2. **Psychological interventions** can be developed to target childhood vulnerabilities (risks for chronic pain).
3. **Technology** may help to increase **access** to pain interventions and reduce inequities (unfairness related to getting treatment).
4. **Future research** is needed to increase **engagement** with and access to digital interventions.

What is the link?

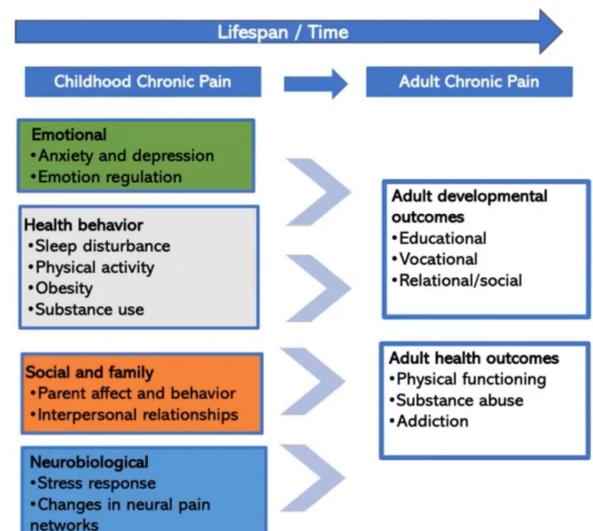
Children do not “grow out” of pain.

Research has found that a large percentage of children with pain will have a continuation of their symptoms into adulthood, as well as increased risk of other chronic pain conditions. These individuals are also predisposed to:

- Higher risk of anxiety & depression into adulthood
- Lower possibility of high school/college degree
- Increased possibility of receiving public assistance
- Negative social impacts (relationships, etc.)

How can we help?

1. Early identification & treatment of pain
2. Pain self-management: Education, lifestyle changes, pain coping skills, emotional & social support, including psychological interventions. These skills can be taught to parents & children with chronic pain.
3. Psychological therapies (taught by a therapist, then practiced at home) can reduce: pain intensity, pain frequency, disability, and anxiety



But what are the barriers? Shortage of dedicated interdisciplinary pain clinics that have providers who are physicians or psychologists, and not enough pain psychologists who are conveniently located. Some think it is a weakness or shameful to see a psychologist. It is important to understand that working with a child psychologist can change the way the brain understands pain and can help prevent pain, anxiety, depression and problems with social interactions and in the workplace in adulthood.

So what is the solution? Telehealth/telemedicine, eHealth (Internet), mHealth (Smartphone apps)
 These are promising modes of delivery of health care based on current and ongoing research!

What is Internet based CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)?

- Child skills training: goal setting, behavioral activation, behavioral skills such as deep breathing and relaxation, cognitive restructuring, sleep, physical activity interventions
- Parent skills training: communication, modeling, changing behavioral responses, supporting children’s skills