

# DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

## BE PREPARED

For the best outcome from a visit with your doctor, it's important to be prepared. The more completely and clearly you describe the pain you're experiencing, the easier it will be for your doctor to help you find relief from that pain. Included in this discussion guide are:

- Questions about your pain journey
- Conversation starters for talking with your doctor
- Tips
- A pain journal where you can record information about the pain you're experiencing.

Review and complete this guide and bring it to your next doctor appointment.

If your doctor is unwilling or unable to offer you further treatment options, ask for a referral for a spine surgeon or pain management specialist. Or, use the handy "Find a Specialist" tool on [medtronic.com/necksurgeology](https://www.medtronic.com/necksurgeology) to find a specialist in your area.

## STEP 1: ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PAIN JOURNEY

**Does your pain seem to be getting better, worse, or staying the same?**

- Better
- Worse
- Staying the same

**Where do you have pain? Is it radiating?**

- Neck only
- Neck pain with radiating pain to arms
- Neck pain with radiating pain to shoulders
- Shoulder or arm pain only
- Back only
- Back pain with radiating pain to legs

**How long have you been experiencing pain?**

- Less than 8 weeks
- 8 weeks to 6 months
- More than 6 months

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## What intensity of pain are you experiencing?

- Mild (can perform daily activities)
- Moderate (can perform daily activities, but with difficulty)
- Severe (pain is so severe, you cannot perform many daily activities)

## Have you lost feeling or function in any body part or are you experiencing problems with bladder or bowel function?

- Yes\*
- No

\*If yes, seek help and contact your doctor immediately.

## Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms?

- Weakness, numbness or tingling in arm and/or hand
- Trouble walking
- Deterioration of fine motor skills (writing, buttoning a shirt)
- Loss of movement in your arm and/or hand

## What kind of doctor have you seen for your pain? (choose all that apply)

- I have not seen a doctor
- I have seen a chiropractor
- I have seen my primary care doctor (family care or internal medicine doctor)
- I have seen a surgeon
- I have seen a pain specialist (anesthesiologist or physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist)

## Which treatments have you tried? (choose all that apply)

- Rest, ice packs, pain or anti-inflammatory medication
- Physical therapy
- Epidural steroid injections

## Has a doctor told you that you have a neurologic problem, severe loss of function, or pain that does not respond to conservative treatments?

- Yes
- No

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Has your doctor told you that any of the following conditions are causing your pain? If so, select which condition:

- Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS), Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD), or Causalgia
- Degenerative disc disease (DDD)
- Failure of the fusion
- Herniated disc, with neck/arm pain
- Osteoporosis
- Peripheral causalgia
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Radicular pain syndrome
- Spinal stenosis
- Spondylosis
- Spondylolisthesis
- Trauma to a nerve
- Vertebral compression fracture (VCF)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## STEP 2: CONVERSATION STARTERS

Select the questions you would like to ask your doctor at your next appointment.

**Questions for your primary care doctor:**

- What is my diagnosis?
- What treatment options are available to me?
- What type of alternative therapies should/can I try?
- Will you put me on medications? If so, what are they and are there any side effects?
- Will my insurance cover the treatments?
- How often will I need to see you?
- Is surgery possible in my future? If so, what type(s) of surgery?
- What pain management options haven't I tried?
- What other specialists could I be referred to?
- What lifestyle changes, if any, will I need to make?
- Who should I call in your office if I have more questions?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

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## Questions for a surgeon:

- What are all of my treatment options?
- What is the most common procedure for my diagnosis?
- Will the procedure you are recommending allow me to maintain range of motion in my neck? If not, what is another option?
- Based on my diagnosis, what procedure is best for me?
- What do we know about the long-term effects of the procedure?
- Am I the right type of candidate for the procedure?
- Does my diagnosis match up with what the procedure is designed and approved for?
- What type of surgical approach is used?
- Where will the scar be and how large will it be?
- Will I need a bone graft?
- What type of bone graft options do I have?
- What are the pros and cons of each?
- Will I need any implants?
- Who manufactures the implants?
- What is the success rate with these implants?
- What will the type of surgical approach mean for my recovery?
- How long will I need to stay in the hospital?
- Will I need physical therapy or post-surgical rehabilitation?
- How long have you been performing this type of procedure?
- Can you tell me about the outcomes of your other patients who have had the procedure?
- What if I want to choose a procedure you don't think is best for me?
- What are the risks of having the wrong procedure?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions for a pain specialist:

- What treatments are used to manage chronic pain? What options haven't I tried?
- Is spine surgery an option for me?
- What are possible treatment goals for me?

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## STEP 3: REVIEW TIPS

Describe your pain as clearly and completely as possible. Use the Pain Journal to record the type of pain you experience and frequency/duration.

Once you've found a doctor you are comfortable with, build a relationship so that you trust his/her advice and assessment.

Don't solely rely on your doctor's judgment—ask questions and do your own research. And if you're ever uncomfortable, ask for a second opinion.

Tell your doctor about how pain is affecting your quality of life. If your personal relationships or overall wellbeing are suffering, your doctor needs to know.

If your doctor is not familiar with the range of treatments for chronic pain, ask for a referral to a spine surgeon, or use the Find a Specialist tool on [medtronic.com/necksurgery](http://medtronic.com/necksurgery).

Talk to other patients before choosing a specialist. Here are some questions you may want to ask them:

- Did the doctor take enough time, both in treating and in explaining things to you and your family?
- Did you feel confident in the doctor's expertise?
- Would you return to this doctor for further care?
- Was the doctor easy to contact, especially after surgery?
- Was the doctor's office staff courteous and cooperative?

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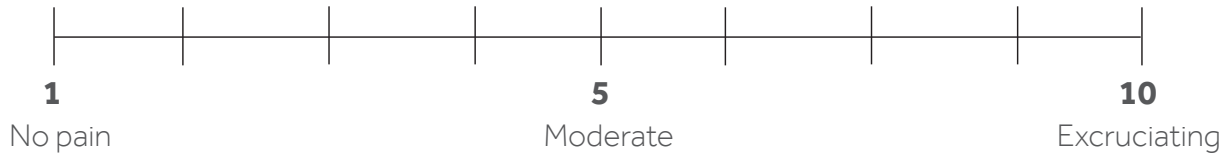
## STEP 4: TRACK YOUR PAIN

To help you and your doctor decide the best option for treating your type of pain, it's important to keep track of your pain. When does it occur? What kind of pain is it? Is it preventing you from doing things you enjoy?

The following descriptions will help you label the level of your pain, the type of pain, and how the pain affects your activities as you complete your pain journal.

### Level of Pain

Describe your level of pain from 1 to 10, from very mild to the most excruciating.



### Type of Pain

Your type of pain can be described with words like:

- Burning
- Sharp
- Aching
- Dull
- Shooting
- Radiating
- Tingling
- Throbbing

### Location of Pain

Describe as precisely as you can the place/s in your body where you are feeling the pain.

### Impact on your activities at the time

You can describe how pain impacts your activities with phrases like:

- Had to skip my walk
- Couldn't get out of the chair
- Didn't notice the pain
- Had to sit instead of stand
- Pain too intense to eat
- Difficulty concentrating
- Pain made it hard to fall asleep
- Had to cancel an appointment due to pain

# PAIN JOURNAL

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