# General Body Pain

## *Executive summary*

## Introduction

This is a very common presentation. Everyone at some point in their life suffers from general body aches and pain. It is your body’s way of letting you know it is time to make some changes and slow down.

The human body is under constant gravity and movement pressure as demanded by our lifestyle: work activities, posture, home duties, shopping, carrying, lifting, bending over, farming, gardening, exercise etc. All these activities require body movement and can cause General Body Aches & Pains.

Usually, when general body aches and pain are felt, it is caused by life stress, fatigue, restless/ poor sleep, muscle strain, poor eating habits, lack of exercise, poor posture, an injury or over-use. Today’s lifestyle, family and work are all demanding on our body.

It may also reflect the presence of a very severe illness, such as sepsis or rheumatoid arthritis, joint inflammation, ligament trauma, or it may indicate something milder, like a fresh cold. It is not unusual for mental illness, especially depression, to present this way.

Thankfully, many general body aches and pains are treatable.

## Target users

* Nurses

## Target area of use

* Gate clinic

## Key areas of focus / New additions / Changes

This guideline is intended to help nurses think about the possible causes of general body pain.

## Limitations

None.

## Presenting symptoms and signs

Ask the patient how long the general body pain has been present. Is it present at all times? Are there parts of the body that are more painful than others?

Are there any associated symptoms, such as fever, joint pain or swelling, cough, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting, weight loss, reduced appetite, difficulty sleeping?

How does the patient present themselves? Do they make eye contact with you? Are they able to talk comfortably?

## Management

If the patient is able to describe other symptoms, then treat them according to the diagnosis that these suggest. Consider the possibility of malaria, fresh cold or another infection.

If you are unable to make a diagnosis and the symptoms seem severe, refer the patient to the doctor.

If the patient does not seem to be severely unwell, consider treating with 3 days of paracetamol 15-20 mg/kg (max 1g) TDS for 3 days. Ask the patient to return if they are not better.

For patients with persisting general body pains, conditions to consider include:

1. Stress
2. Dehydration
3. Lack of refreshing sleep
4. Anaemia
5. Vitamin D Deficiency
6. Arthritis
7. Depression
8. Anxiety disorder
9. Lupus
10. Neurological pathologies like Multiple Sclerosis
11. Fibromyalgia
12. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

## Suggested Treatment Modalities

1. Physiotherapy Treatments methods- To promote relaxation include
   1. Manipulation: Spine, joints etc
   2. Mobilisation- Joints basically
   3. Massage (deep tissue massage)
   4. Exercises to strengthen the muscles that support the spine and vital organs.
2. Rheumatologist- Need to refer to Dakar, Senegal

## When to refer to Dr in OPD

*Refer* to the doctor

* if you are unable to make a diagnosis
* if the patient is severely unwell
* if you make a diagnosis needing a doctors review

**References**

‘General Body Aches & Pains-101 Physio’ Australian Physiotherapy Association. Accessed at <http://101physio.com.au/101-physio-general-body-pain-therapy>

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