**How half of Britons are suffering from long term pain: Up to 28 million adults in Briton have struggled with discomfort for more than three months**

* **Study finds that half of the adult population is living day-to-day with pain**
* **Up to 28 million adults have been living in pain for more than three months**
* **Thought to be down to the prevalence of back problems and arthritis**

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Almost half the adult population is living with chronic pain, doctors claim.

Up to 28million people, or 43 per cent of all adults, have been in pain for more than three months – and the total is only likely to rise as the population continues to age.

A team from Imperial College London found the prevalence of chronic pain such as back problems or arthritis increased with age.

Just one in seven adults under 25 reported chronic pain, compared with almost two-thirds of people over the age of 75.

Overall, problems such as lower back pain or osteoarthritis affect 35 to 51 per cent of adults, with women most likely to be sufferers.

The researchers, who examined data from 19 studies that included the medical details of almost 140,000 British adults, said: ‘Chronic pain affects between one third and one half of the population of the UK, corresponding to just under 28 million adults.

‘Chronic pain prevalence rises steadily with increasing age, affecting up to 62 per cent of the population over the age of 75, suggesting that the burden of chronic pain may increase further still, in line with an ageing population.’

Of the total, eight million people suffer moderate to severely disabling chronic pain according to the study, which was published in the journal BMJ Open.

The research, which looked at studies of different types of pain published after 1990, found the number of sufferers had been consistently underestimated.

It also suggested that the number of people aged 18 to 39 living with chronic pain could be as high as three in ten.

Dr Alan Fayaz, of Imperial’s department of Surgery and Cancer, said: ‘Between 10.4 and 14.3 per cent of the population report chronic pain that is either moderately or severely limiting, figures that translate into an estimated median of 7.9million people in the UK population with this category of chronic pain.’

For some, the condition can be even more severe, with 14 per cent of UK adults living with chronic widespread pain, where the sufferer’s whole body may be affected.

It also showed that 8 per cent of British adults experience chronic neuropathic pain, which is caused by nerve problems, and 5.5 per cent live with fibromyalgia, a condition that causes pain all over the body.

A major issue is the lack of effective treatments for back pain and joint problems, leaving doctors having to rely on powerful pain- killers such as tramadol, oxycodone or morphine.

But recent studies have found that these drugs provide minimal benefit for back pain, and come with a severe risk of side-effects.

Even paracetamol is ineffective against osteoarthritis – the most common form of arthritis and a major cause of hip and knee pain.

While scientists and pharmaceutical firms have made huge strides in battling complex diseases such as cancer and heart disease, the seemingly basic problem of joint pain has remained a stumbling block.

Charities have repeatedly called for more research into the issue, which causes misery for many.

Olivia Belle, from the charity Arthritis Research UK, said: ‘This is an important study, which starkly shows the devastating impact that chronic pain is having on people in the UK.’

She added: ‘As our population continues to age and obesity rates rise, we are only going to see these numbers grow.

‘And although we may not be able to see it, living in pain, day in and day out, can have a devastating impact on people’s lives, affecting their independence, mobility and ability to stay in work.

‘There is also, unsurprisingly, a direct link between chronic pain and depression. If we are going to address this growing need, we need better pain management and better treatments to relieve pain.’