

# Acute Pain

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## 1 Definition

### 1.1 Problems with traditional acute/chronic classification

Traditionally, Acute vs chronic pain has been defined based on an arbitrary time frame (3mo or 6mo)<sup>1</sup>. These criteria do not take into consideration

- Intensity of pain<sup>1</sup>
- Severity<sup>1</sup>
- Nature of its impact on functioning or treatment-seeking behaviors<sup>1</sup>
- Whether pain must be present every day<sup>1</sup>
- How frequent it occurs in this interval<sup>1</sup>

### 1.2 New Classification

A new classification was proposed conceptualizing acute and chronic pain on two dimensions: time and physical pathology<sup>1</sup>

Acute pain is the physiologic response to and experience of noxious stimuli that can become pathologic, is normally sudden in onset, is time-limited, and motivates behaviors to avoid potential or actual tissue injury<sup>1</sup>. Pain is elicited by the injury of body tissues and activation of nociceptive transducers at the site of local tissue damage<sup>1</sup>. The local injury alters the response characteristics of the nociceptors and perhaps their central connections and the autonomic nervous system in the region<sup>1</sup>. In general, the state of acute pain lasts for a relatively limited

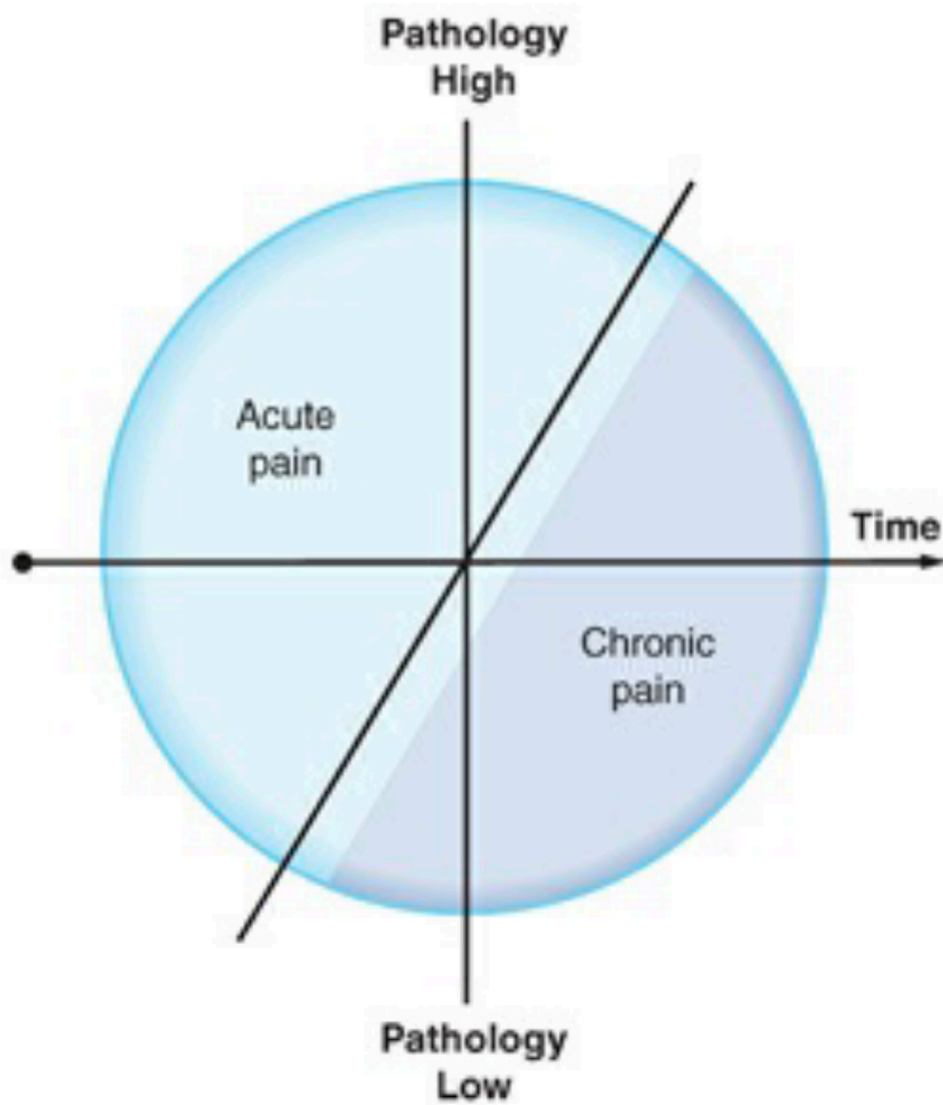


Figure 1: Pictorial representation of acute and chronic pain<sup>1</sup>

time and remits when the underlying pathology resolves<sup>1</sup>. This type of pain often serves as the impetus to seek health care, and it occurs following trauma, some disease processes, and invasive interventions<sup>1</sup>.

1. Ballantyne J, Fishman S, Rathmell JP, eds. *Bonica's Management of Pain*. 5th ed. Wolters Kluwer; 2019.