

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)¹. These criteria do not take into consideration

- Intensity of pain¹
- Severity¹
- Nature of its impact on functioning or treatment-seeking behaviors¹
- Whether pain must be present every day¹
- How frequent it occurs in this interval¹

1.2 New Classification

A new classification was proposed conceptualizing acute and chronic pain on two dimensions: time and physical pathology¹

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 injury¹. Pain is elicited by the injury of body tissues and activation of nociceptive transducers at the site of local tissue damage¹. The local injury alters the response characteristics of the nociceptors and perhaps their central connections and the autonomic nervous system in the region¹. In general, the state of acute pain lasts for a relatively limited

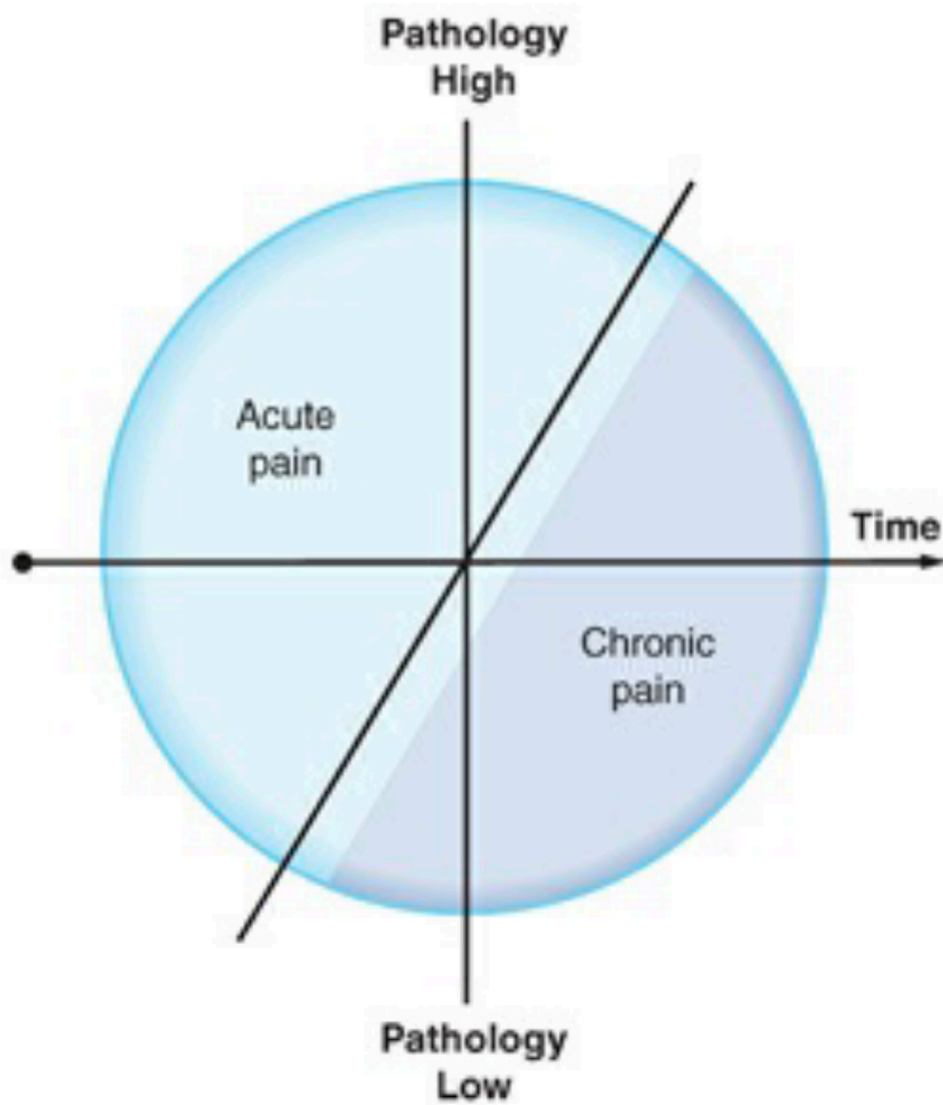


Figure 1: Pictorial representation of acute and chronic pain¹

time and remits when the underlying pathology resolves¹. This type of pain often serves as the impetus to seek health care, and it occurs following trauma, some disease processes, and invasive interventions¹.

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