

Women, Chronic Pain & Prescription Opioids:

8 Key Issues & Ideas for Action

These key issues and ideas for action for healthcare providers were identified in a study on women's chronic pain and experiences with prescription opioid use led by the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

1

Women report higher rates of chronic pain.

Women consistently report higher rates of chronic pain compared to men. Given its profound impact, the investigation and treatment of women's chronic pain requires more research and attention.

2

Biology affects chronic pain.

Biological factors and mechanisms affect the experience of chronic pain. Female anatomy, physiology, and hormones contribute to women being more susceptible to migraine, chronic pelvic pain, vulvodynia, endometriosis, TMJ disorder, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

3

Societal expectations of women affect experiences of chronic pain.

Chronic pain can affect women's ability to parent and work. It also impacts their relationships. For example, women living with endometriosis, vulvodynia, and chronic pelvic pain may struggle in their romantic partnerships with intimacy or with their identity as a woman.

4

Women's chronic pain is often dismissed.

Chronic pain in women may be dismissed based on gender stereotypes, such as falsely attributing it to higher sensitivity in women compared to men. As a result, women's chronic pain frequently goes untreated for extended periods.

What Can You Do?

5

Involve women in decisions about treatment.

Women want to be actively involved in their pain management. They want to know more about pain management strategies, including medications and lifestyle considerations, that may work for them.

6

Know that women feel prescription opioids have a role.

Women report that prescription opioids for pain management enable them to engage in daily activities, fulfill familial responsibilities, pursue exercise routines, and enhance their overall well-being.

7

Provide more information about prescription opioids

Women often report receiving minimal or inadequate information about the medications they have been prescribed. They want more information regarding the medication class, associated benefits and risks, and the long-term effects of medication.

8

Hold empowering conversations about comprehensive options.

Women emphasized their desire to receive guidance from providers on diverse and comprehensive treatment options to manage pain and how to access these resources in their region.

For more information visit our website at www.cewh.ca

For a full list of references, view our [Research Methodology](#).

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