

# Does persistent pain impact older adults' physical function, cognition, and well-being?

December 7 2022

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In a study in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* of 5,589 US adults aged 65 years and older, persistent pain was common and was linked to meaningful declines in physical function and well-being over 7

years.

Investigators found that 38.7% of participants reported persistent pain, and 27.8% reported intermittent pain. ("Persistent pain" was defined as being bothered by pain in the last month in two consecutive annual interviews and "intermittent" pain was defined as bothersome pain in one interview only.)

More than one-third of participants described pain in five or more sites. Over the subsequent 7 years, participants with persistent pain were more likely to experience declines in physical function (64% persistent pain, 59% intermittent pain, 57% no bothersome pain) and well-being (48% persistent pain, 45% intermittent pain, 44% no bothersome pain), but were not more likely to experience cognitive decline (25% persistent pain, 24% intermittent pain, 23% no bothersome pain).

"The findings from this study point to the importance of access to [effective treatment](#) for [persistent pain](#) in [older adults](#) and the need for additional research in [chronic pain](#) to optimize quality of life," said lead author Christine Ritchie, MD, MSPH, of Massachusetts General Hospital.

**More information:** Impact of Persistent Pain on Function, Cognition, and Well-being of Older Adults, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.18125](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.18125)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Does persistent pain impact older adults' physical function, cognition, and well-being? (2022, December 7) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-persistent-pain-impact-older-adults.html>

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