

# Island Health Pain Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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## Section 1: General Questions – New Patients

### 1. Where is the Pain Clinic(s) located and how do I contact them?

The Island Health pain program has 3 pain clinics. They are closed on statutory holidays.

- I. **Central Island Pain Program** is located in the **Nanaimo Regional General Hospital**.  
**Address:** 1200 Dufferin Crescent, Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 2B7  
**Telephone:** 250-739-5978  
**Hours of operation:** 8am to 4pm  
**Website:** <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/pain-program-services/pain-program>
  
- II. The **Comox Valley Nursing Centre** offers limited pain services as part of its chronic disease management program.  
**Address:** 615 Tenth St Courtenay, B.C. V9N 1R2.  
**Telephone:** 250-331-8502  
**Hours of operation:** 9 am to 4:30 pm  
**Website:** <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/pain-program-locations/comox-valley-pain-program>
  
- III. **Victoria Pain Clinic** is located at the **Royal Jubilee Hospital** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Memorial Pavilion.  
**Address:** 1952 Bay St. Victoria, BC. V8R 1J8.  
**Telephone:** 250-519-1836  
**Hours of operation:** 8am to 4pm  
**Website:** <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/pain-program-services/pain-program>

### 2. Who should attend the Pain Clinic?

The pain clinic is for individuals with chronic pain. Chronic pain is described as pain that has lasted for greater than 3 months. Due to this pain, patients may experience challenges in carrying out their activities of daily living. The Pain Management Program offers a comprehensive approach to help patients living with chronic pain. The program provides patients with a range of different tools and strategies to help improve their quality of life.

### 3. How can I get a referral to the Pain Clinic?

To receive care at the pain clinic, the clinic must receive a referral from a family doctor, nurse practitioner, or a doctor at a walk-in clinic. We do not accept self-referrals.

### 4. Why was my referral declined?

Not every patient's referral to the pain clinic is accepted. If your referral is not accepted, the Pain Clinic will notify the provider who referred you to the Pain Clinic. This provider will then follow up with you.

**5. How do I get an appointment?**

Once the Pain Clinic has received your referral, it will be reviewed by the pain team to determine if the Pain Clinic is the next best step for you. If the team determines that you should be seen by the Pain Clinic, they will review your case to identify how quickly you should be seen. You will be called by the Pain Clinic with the date and time of your appointment.

**6. My family doctor retired/I don't have a family doctor, can I still come to the clinic?**

If you do not have a primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner), you can seek care at a walk-in-clinic. The doctor at the walk-in-clinic can send your referral.

**7. What services does the Pain Clinic offer?**

- We aim to provide you with tools and resources to help you manage your pain and improve your quality of life and overall function. We provide assessments, self-management programs, medical treatments, and education. Please note, the clinic in Comox does not have pain physicians.

- Our doctors work with your primary care provider to make recommendations around medications. We are not a prescription service.

- Each pain clinic offers an orientation to its pain program. The pain clinics also offer pain education and specialized classes, such as CBT therapy for sleep and insomnia, mindfulness, and movement classes.

**8. Are there any restrictions related to accessing Pain Clinic Services?**

The pain clinic does not serve pediatric patients (i.e., those aged 18 or younger). Patients must also reside within Island Health (Vancouver Island, Gulf and Discovery Islands, and the coastal area north of Powell River).

**9. Are the Pain Clinics accepting new patients?**

Yes, the Pain Clinics are accepting new patients.

**10. How long will I have to wait for my first appointment?**

Due to the high percentage of people with chronic pain, Island Health's pain clinics have a long wait list and long wait times. Referrals received by primary care providers will be triaged into categories of urgency.

**11. Will my first appointment be with a physician?**

Not every patient will see a pain physician. The need to see a physician is made on a patient-by-patient basis. If the pain team decides that you should see a physician, you will be contacted with a date and time of your appointment.

## **12. Who is the pain team?**

Each clinic has an interdisciplinary team. Pain Physicians work at the **Victoria and Central Island Pain Clinics**. These physicians offer interventional pain care (e.g., injections). At these clinics, you may also be seen by non-physician team members, such as the pharmacist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or social worker. The Victoria Pain Clinic also has a psychiatrist and psychologist.

There is a small Pain Clinic located in the **Comox Valley Nursing Centre**. This team includes nursing, physiotherapy, and a social worker. There are no physician services offered at this clinic.

## **13. Where can I find more information about the Pain Clinic, its staff, and the services it offers?**

The services that each clinic offers may be found on the [pain program website](#).

## **14. I am physically disabled. Can I attend the Clinic?**

If you are physically disabled, you can attend the clinic. Each of the clinics are accessible by wheelchair. If you are visually impaired, a supportive companion, including a guide dog, is allowed to accompany you to your appointment.

## Section 2: General Pain and Pain Care Questions

**1. Will my pain completely go away?**

The goal of the pain program is to improve quality of life and function. This is achieved through working with our pain team, setting realistic and obtainable goals, and attending our educational classes. Patients rarely report that their pain has been eliminated after attending a pain management program. Instead, patients often report a reduction in pain intensity.

**2. What processes does the Pain Clinic have for follow-up of its patients?**

Your follow up care is dependent upon the pain team's assessment and your care plan. Your care plan could include seeing a physician, a member of the interdisciplinary team, or both.

**3. How does the Pain Clinic team work with (my) other medical or social specialists/ programs?**

The pain team will refer you to other providers and programs, as needed. For example, you could be referred to other physicians, such as physiatry. We also refer patients when required to allied health professionals, such as social work or mental health case workers.

**4. Who gets to see my results?**

To better support your care, your results are shared with members of the pain team who are directly involved with your care. Your results are also shared with the provider who referred you to the pain program.

**5. Do I have the right to request copies of any tests/results from the Pain Clinic?**

Yes. All patients have the right to request copies of all tests and results. We encourage all patients to sign up to Island Health MyHealth Portal. You can find out more about the MyHealth Portal, including how to sign up by visiting this [website](#).

**6. Will the Pain Clinic communicate with my provider (e.g., primary care provider or physician at walk-in clinic)?**

There is ongoing 2-way communication between the provider who referred you to the Pain Program and the pain team.

**7. Do I need another referral to the pain program if I haven't attended for a while?**

If you have not been seen by the pain program for 1 year, your provider will need to send another referral. Additionally, if you are having pain in a new location, your provider will need to send a new referral for the new area that you are experiencing pain.

**8. Will the Pain Clinic have access to my other medical records?**

Within Island Health, the pain team has access to your electronic health records for the care provided to you by Island Health. Each year, all staff are required to complete confidential information management training.

**9. How will my protected health information be used? Who will see it?**

Your health information will be seen by members of the pain team directly involved in your care. This information will be used to develop your treatment plan and make decisions with you about your care.

**10. How do I give feedback to the Pain Clinic?**

You can call the pain clinic directly with your feedback.

- i. [Central Island Pain Program](#) is located in the **Nanaimo Regional General Hospital**.  
**Address:** 1200 Dufferin Crescent. Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 2B7  
**Telephone:** 250-739-5978
  
- ii. The [Comox Valley Nursing Centre](#) offers limited pain services as part of its chronic disease management program.  
**Address:** 615 Tenth St Courtenay, B.C. V9N 1R2.  
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- iii. [Victoria Pain Clinic](#) is located at the **Royal Jubilee Hospital** on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Memorial Pavilion.  
**Address:** 1952 Bay St. Victoria, BC. V8R 1J8.  
**Telephone:** 250-519-1836

**11. Who can I speak to about any concern or complaint I may have about the Pain Clinic?**

You can submit your concerns, including compliments or a complaint to the Patient Care Quality Office (PCQO). You may contact them by mail, email, telephone or fax.

**Mail:**

PCQO  
Royal Jubilee Hospital  
Memorial Pavilion, Watson Wing, Rm 315  
1952 Bay Street.  
Victoria, B.C. V8R 1J8  
**Email:** [patientcarequalityoffice@viha.ca](mailto:patientcarequalityoffice@viha.ca)

**Fax:** 250-370-8137

**Telephone:** 250-370-8323 or toll-free: 1-877-977-5797. They are open Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. They are closed on weekends and stat holidays.

## Section 3: Patients Referred to the clinic - Waiting for First Appointment

- 1. My doctor sent a referral, why haven't I heard anything about an appointment?**  
Due to the high percentage of people with chronic pain, Island Health's pain clinics have a long wait list and long wait times. Referrals received by primary care providers will be assessed into categories of urgency.
- 2. Will my first appointment be with a physician?**  
Not necessarily, as not every patient will need to see a pain physician. The need to see a physician is made on a patient-by-patient basis. If the pain team decides that you should see a physician, you will be contacted with a date and time of your appointment.
- 3. What documentation should I bring to my first appointment?**  
Please bring your health card to all of your appointments. We may require that you bring a list of the medications, including supplements that you are currently taking.
- 4. Should I wear a mask to Pain Clinic appointments/classes?**  
During COVID-19 policies, everyone entering any Island Health facility must wear a medical grade mask.
- 5. How do I access other resources about pain management/programmes?**  
Pain BC has a lot of great resources online for patients with chronic pain. You can find out more about Pain BC by visiting their website: <https://www.painbc.ca/>. They can also be reached by phone at 1-844-430-0818.
- 6. How do I cancel or reschedule an appointment?**  
Please call the pain clinic where your appointment is scheduled to cancel or reschedule. If possible, please give us at least 48 hours notice so that we can use that appointment time for other patients. The telephone number for the clinics are:
  - [Centre Island Pain Program](#), Nanaimo Regional General Hospital. Telephone: 250-739-5978
  - [Comox Valley Nursing Centre](#) Pain Clinic. Telephone: 250-331-8502.
  - [Victoria Pain Clinic](#), Royal Jubilee Hospital. Telephone: 250-519-1836 ext 2

Leave one voicemail clearly stating your name, birthdate, time and date of your appointment. Your call will be returned as soon as possible (we aim to return messages within 24 to 72 hours).



**7. Why do I need to fill out all this paperwork?**

In order to provide you with the best possible care, it's important that we learn more about you. You will be asked about your medical history. You will also be asked to complete questionnaires on how and to what extent chronic pain is impacting your daily life. The pain team will use this information to help develop your treatment plan.

**8. Can I request an appointment with a particular specialist?**

We have reduced waiting times for patients by moving to a system in which we schedule appointments using a "first available model." This means that a patient will be scheduled to see the first available pain physician. You can request an appointment with a particular pain doctor, but you should be aware that this may increase the amount of time that you wait to see a doctor.

**9. Do I have the option of attending appointments/classes virtually?**

Due to COVID-19, the Pain Orientation Session and all classes are currently held virtually using zoom. If you are seeing the pain physician for the first time, your appointment will be scheduled virtually, over the phone or in-person. The pain clinic will contact you with appointment details.

**10. How long is my doctor's referral good for before it needs reactivating/renewing?**

If you have not been seen by one of our pain doctors for over a year, you will require a new referral to the pain clinic.

## Section 4: Patients Waiting for a Procedure

### **1. Can I drive after a procedure?**

No, you cannot drive for 12 hours after the procedure. Please arrange for someone to drive you home, or else your procedure may be cancelled.

### **2. Can I take the bus or taxi after my procedure if I don't have a driver?**

Yes, you can take the bus or taxi after your procedure.

### **3. Can I use my TENS machine after a procedure?**

Yes, you can use your TENS machine after a procedure.

### **4. What are the side effects from injections?**

The side effects will vary depending on the type of injection and medication used. For more information, please review our [patient education brochures](#) which provide information on specific injections.

### **5. Why can't I have another injection one month after, if my pain comes back?**

Frequent steroid injections (i.e., greater than 3 – 4 months) are not recommended due to the side effects of steroid medication.

### **6. I want to be sedated for my procedure; do you offer this?**

No, we do not sedate patients for procedures. The physician uses local anesthetic (numbing medication) to treat the targeted area.

### **7. Should I use ice or heat after my procedure?**

If the injection site is painful, apply ice or a cold pack over the injection site no more than 15 minutes at a time about two to three times each day.