The Task Force emphasizes the importance of compassionate, patient-centered care in the diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic pain. The Task Force recognizes that pain care is not effectively delivered through a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

MILITARY ACTIVE DUTY, RESERVE SERVICE MEMBERS, AND VETERANS

- Pain management can be complex in military populations who experience combat-related injuries and related issues such as post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, which are more widespread in Veterans than in the civilian population.
- Veterans die by suicide at higher rates compared to civilians. Among Veterans, pain conditions are associated with an increased risk of suicide. Clinicians can discuss suicide risk with Veterans and recognize that public health approaches to suicide prevention include addressing pain.
- As a Nation, we must do better in fulfilling our solemn obligation to care for all those who have served our country and to improve the quality of life of our Nation’s Veterans.

PREGNANT WOMEN

- Managing pain in pregnant women is challenging because decisions must account for the pregnant mother and the developing fetus.
- Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) may occur when a pregnant woman takes opioid medications.

WOMEN

- Research suggests that women experience more pain than men, have greater sensitivities to pain compared with men, and report experiencing more intense pain.

CHILDREN/YOUTH

- Chronic pain is estimated to affect 5% to 38% of children and adolescents. These pain conditions can be from congenital diseases (e.g. sickle cell disease), where pain begins in the infant or toddler age period; chronic noncongenital diseases (e.g., juvenile idiopathic arthritis, fibromyalgia, inflammatory bowel disease); or primary chronic pain conditions (e.g., headaches, chronic abdominal pain, chronic musculoskeletal pain, CRPS).
- Poor pain management in children can put them at risk for persistent pain and more harm as they transition into adulthood and may be linked to the development of new chronic pain conditions.

OLDER ADULTS

- Chronic pain is one of the most common, costly, and incapacitating conditions in older adults.
- Managing pain in older adults can be complex because of age-related physiologic changes, associated medical and mental health comorbidities, use of multiple medications, increases in pain thresholds, decreases in pain tolerance, and increases in risk of side effects from pain medication treatment.
CONCLUSION

Clinicians, as well as the larger health system, must consider the pain management needs of all people, including the unique needs of the special patient populations described in the Task Force’s Report, such as children/youth, older adults, women, pregnant women, individuals with chronic relapsing pain conditions such as sickle cell disease, racial and ethnic populations, active duty military, reserve service members and Veterans, and patients with cancer-related pain and patients in palliative care.

LEARN MORE

For more information on the unique challenges these special populations face in the management of pain:


→ Visit the Pain Management Task Force website for fact sheets, talking points and infographics to learn more about the Report’s findings https://www.hhs.gov/ash/advisory-committees/pain/index.html

→ For more news about the Task Force and the Report, check out the HHS Blog.