The currently accepted definition of pain was originally adopted in 1979 by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP).

**1979 Definition of Pain**
An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.

In 2018, IASP constituted a 14-member multi-national task force with expertise in clinical and basic science related to pain, which sought input from multiple stakeholders to determine: “Does the progress in our knowledge of pain over the years warrant a re-evaluation of the definition?”

**2020 Revised Definition of Pain**
An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with, or resembling that associated with, actual or potential tissue damage.

**2020 Revised Definition of Pain Notes**
- Pain is always a personal experience that is influenced to varying degrees by biological, psychological, and social factors.
- Pain and nociception are different phenomena. Pain cannot be inferred solely from activity in sensory neurons.
- Through their life experiences, individuals learn the concept of pain.
- A person’s report of an experience as pain should be respected.
- Although pain usually serves an adaptive role, it may have adverse effects on function and social and psychological well-being.
- Verbal description is only one of several behaviors to express pain; inability to communicate does not negate the possibility that a human or a nonhuman animal experiences pain.

The revised IASP definition of pain: concepts, challenges, and compromises
Raja et al. (2020) | Pain
DOI: 10.1097/j.pain.00000000000001939