



A Patient's Guide to Pain Management

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This brochure talks about pain and how it can be controlled. Reading this brochure should help you to:

- Learn about pain and the goals of pain control
- Talk with your health care providers about your pain and how well the treatment is working
- Work with your health care providers to find the best way to control your pain

What is pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that tells you something may be wrong in your body. Pain is your body's way of sending a warning to your brain.

Sometimes pain may be temporary, like a mild headache. Pain that doesn't go away — even after you take pain medicine — may be a sign that there is a problem. Your health care providers will ask about your pain because they are concerned about your comfort and want to know if something is wrong. Be sure to tell them when you have pain.

Goals of pain control

Treatments are available to relieve or reduce most pain. Get help right away, and don't let anyone tell you that your pain is simply "in your head."

Pain control can help:

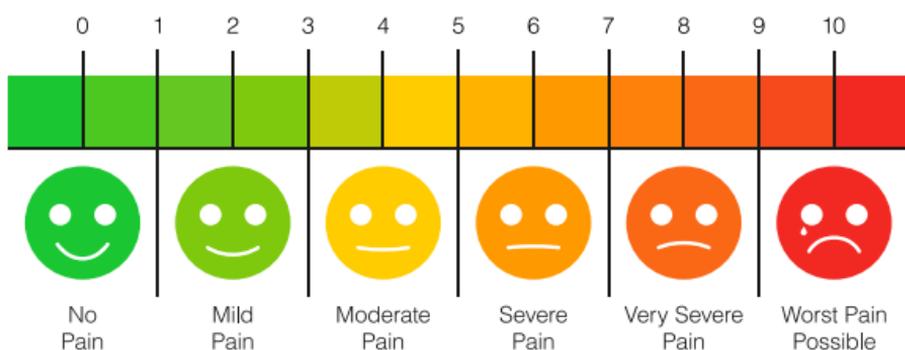
- Provide you greater comfort
- Improve your ability to move around and maintain your strength





How do I talk with my physician or nurse about pain?

1. Speak up! Tell your physician or nurse that you're in pain. It is not a sign of weakness to tell them about your pain, so don't be embarrassed or afraid to talk about it.
2. Tell your physician or nurse where it hurts. Do you have pain in one place or several places? Does the pain seem to move around?
3. Describe how much your pain hurts. On a scale from zero to 10, zero means no pain at all and 10 means the worst pain you can imagine.
4. Describe what makes your pain better or worse. Is the pain always there, or does it sometimes go away? Does the pain get worse when you move in certain ways? Do other things make it better or worse?
5. Describe what your pain feels like. Use specific words like sharp, stabbing, dull, aching, burning, shock-like, tingling, throbbing, deep, pressing, etc.
6. Explain how the pain affects your daily life. Does it keep you from any activities? Work? Can you sleep? Are you able to visit with family and friends? Can you concentrate on tasks? How is your mood? Are you sad? Irritable? Depressed? Do you feel unable to cope?
7. Tell your physician or nurse about past treatments for pain. Mention other approaches you've tried. Have you done massage, yoga or meditation? Applied heat or cold to the painful areas? Exercised? Tried other treatments? Explain what worked and what didn't.



Pain control options

Both non-drug and drug treatments can help prevent and control pain. The most common methods of pain control are described here.

Pain relief and the point at which you feel pain are different for everyone. The amount or type of pain you feel may not be the same as others feel.

Non-drug pain relief methods

Drugs are not the only option for managing pain. Depending on the cause of your pain, your health care provider may suggest:

- Exercising
- Changing the position of your body
- Using heat and/or cold
- Trying immobilization, or keeping still
- Using distraction
- Trying massage, pressure and vibration
- Resting
- Acupuncture

TENS (transcutaneous electrical

nerve stimulation): A TENS unit is a small battery-powered box that can be worn with a beltclip. It sends a mild electrical current along the skin and blocks pain sensations.

Biofeedback: This process involves monitoring physical responses such as muscle tension, heart rate and breathing. A person learns to tell when he or she is reacting to stress and how to control that reaction.

Relaxation techniques: These techniques can help you manage pain, reduce anxiety and stress, and improve sleep. These may include prayer, meditation, hypnosis, visualization or progressive muscle relaxation.

Pain relief medicine

1. **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs**

(NSAIDs): Aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin), Advil and other NSAIDs reduce swelling and soreness and relieve mild to moderate pain.

Benefits: These medicines are often used to treat mild pain and can lessen or eliminate the need for stronger medicines.

Side effects: Most NSAIDs interfere with blood clotting. They may cause nausea, stomach bleeding or kidney problems.

2. **Opioids:** Morphine, codeine, tramadol and other opioids are most often used for severe pain.

Benefits: These medicines are effective for treating severe pain and do not cause bleeding in the stomach or elsewhere.

Side effects: Opioids may cause drowsiness, nausea, constipation or itching, or they may interfere with breathing or urination. These are generally not beneficial to quality of life for chronic pain management but can be helpful for acute pain.

3. **Other medications for chronic pain**

management: Acetaminophen, gabapentin, nortriptyline, Cymbalta, Lyrica, capsaicin, lidocaine and others. Tylenol (acetaminophen) can cause liver failure, so never take more than 3000 mg in 24 hours.

Benefits: These medicines are often safer and more beneficial long term than opioids.

Side effects: Medication-specific; talk to your provider. May include nausea, headache, dizziness, drowsiness, vision change, dry mouth, constipation, leg swelling, kidney or liver problems, redness, burning sensation, skin reaction.



Methods used to give pain relief medicine

Medicine for pain relief may come in a number of different forms. For example:

- Tablets or liquid
- Patches
- Injection into a vein, a muscle, the skin or the spine

Each has advantages and disadvantages. Your health care provider can help determine what works best for you.

Facts about the treatment of pain

If you are having pain, you may have concerns about your medication or other treatments. Here are some common concerns and facts about pain treatment:

Concern: I can only take medicine or other treatments when I have pain.

Fact: You should not wait until the pain becomes severe to do something for your pain. Pain is easier to control when it is mild. You should take your pain medicine as your health care provider directs you.

Concern: I will become hooked or addicted to pain medicine.

Fact: It's important to understand that addiction is not the same as dependence. While many people become dependent on daily opioids, only a small percentage of these people will become addicted. **Dependence** is when your body adapts to the medication and then experiences withdrawal if the medication is stopped or lowered too quickly. Withdrawal symptoms include moodiness, aches and pains, sweating, diarrhea, abdominal pain and even seizures. **Addiction** is characterized by behaviors such as loss of control of drug use, compulsive use and craving, and continued use despite harm or risk to the person. When people are addicted, they are not taking opioids simply to treat the pain.

Concern: If I take too much medicine it will stop working.

Fact: The medicine will not stop working. Sometimes your body can become used to the medicine. This is called **tolerance**. If this happens, the amount of medicine can be adjusted or other medications can be added.

Slow rhythmic breathing for relaxation

Relaxation techniques are easy to learn and can help reduce anxiety. No equipment is needed. Have your health care provider instruct you on the following technique:

1. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
2. As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself beginning to relax; feel the tension leaving your body.
3. Now breathe in and out slowly and regularly, at whatever rate is comfortable to you. You may wish to try abdominal breathing. If you do not know how to do abdominal breathing, ask your provider for help.
4. To help focus on your breathing and to breathe slowly and rhythmically, breathe in as you say silently to yourself, "In, two, three." Breathe out as you say silently to yourself, "Out, two, three."

OR

Each time you breathe out, say silently to yourself a word such as "peace" or "relax."

5. You may imagine that you are doing this in a place that is very calming and relaxing for you, such as lying in the sun at the beach.
6. Do steps one through four only once, or repeat steps three and four for up to 20 minutes.
7. End with a slow, deep breath. As you breathe out, say to yourself, "I feel alert and relaxed."

NOTE: If you intend to do this for more than a few seconds, try to get in a comfortable position in a quiet place. You may close your eyes or focus on an object.





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