

You and your caregiver are in charge of controlling your pain. Your pain level may vary throughout your illness. Our goal is to keep your pain level below a "four." We want you to take your pain medication before your pain gets bad, so it can be controlled appropriately.



0

No Hurt

2

Hurts Little Bit

4

Hurts Little More



6

Hurts Even More

8

Hurts Whole Lot

10

Hurts Worst

Home Care teams are specially trained to be experts in pain and symptom control. Patients no longer have to fear pain. *You have a right to have pain relief.* If you have pain, tell your nurses or physicians.

The definition of pain is "whatever the patient says it is, existing wherever the patient says it does." The Home Care team must assess all aspects (physical, spiritual and psychosocial) of pain to improve the patient's quality of life. Pain is considered the fifth vital sign along with temperature, pulse, blood pressure and respirations.

## SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

The Home Care team can help you manage the common symptoms associated with many illnesses:

- Sleep problems
- Loss of appetite
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Itching
- Bowel and/or bladder incontinence
- Shortness of breath
- Change in mental status

There are many medications that can be prescribed to help decrease symptoms. For example, many hospice patients experience noisy respirations in the last hours due to increased secretions and inability to cough. Atropine drops under the tongue can help reduce symptoms.

Itching is a common symptom, which can be controlled with antihistamines. You should avoid soap and lotions containing perfume and/or alcohol since they dry the skin.

Some people fear getting "hooked" or addicted to pain medicine. Addiction is dependence on a drug for psychological or mental reasons such as "getting high." Studies have shown that people who take medicine to relieve pain almost never have problems with addiction. They only take the amount of medicine they need to control their pain.

*With appropriate symptom control, you can better face the issues that come along with an illness and improve your quality of life.*

### HOME CARE

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All About PAIN

AND

PAIN Management



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Home Care  
of the Regional Medical Center



## PAIN ASSESSMENT

Effective pain management begins with a thorough pain assessment. Your Home Care professional should ask a series of questions, and you should give specific details about your pain so they can provide the best treatment.

- Where is your pain?
- What type of pain (ex. stabbing, burning)?
- How bad is your pain (scale of 0 to 10)?
- What makes it better (ex. medications, rest)?
- Does the pain last all the time, or does it come and go?
- How does the pain affect your activities?
- What is your goal for pain relief?

For patients who are unable to verbalize their pain, there are different assessment tools that can be used.

## TYPES OF PAIN

To maximize the treatment of your pain, a detailed description of your pain assists in what type of medication is chosen. Below are examples:

- **Somatic pain** is an inflammatory process such as with wounds and bones. Words that can be used to describe: localized, dull, sharp, gnawing.
- **Visceral pain** can be from a tumor or injury to an internal organ. Words used to describe: vague pressure, cramping.
- **Neuropathic pain** can be from nerve damage or diabetes. Words used to describe: stinging, burning.
- **Soft tissue pain** is injury to an organ or muscle. Words used to describe: tender, deep, aching.
- **Bone pain** is described as tender when applying pressure which intensifies with movement.
- Increased **intracranial pressure pain** is described as a headache and is often accompanied by nausea.

Physical pain +  
emotional pain + social pain  
+ spiritual pain + financial pain  
= TOTAL PAIN

## OTHER TYPES OF PAIN

- **Emotional pain** may be caused by loss of independence or changing in body image.
- **Spiritual pain** may be related to cultural beliefs. There may be a sense of unfairness (why me?), hopelessness (what's the point?), or guilt (why am I being punished?).
- Feeling isolated or unable to participate in regular activities may cause **social pain**.
- The financial pressures of an illness may cause stress and worry resulting in **financial pain**.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT

Elevated vital signs may occur with acute (sudden) pain, but usually do not occur with chronic pain. More than 90 percent of people with pain will find relief in medicines taken orally (by mouth). There are other options available for patients who cannot take oral medications or need additional pain relief.

Pain control is met when the amount of pain medication that is given matches the pain receptors in the body. The right dose of medication is reached when your pain is controlled, and you regain quality of life.

Often, pain medication should be given around the clock (on a schedule) – not prn (as needed). You want to keep a constant level in your body. The goal is to prevent pain or keep it at a mild level at all times. If increased pain occurs before time for the next dose, additional short-acting pain medication may be given. Do not take any medications (even those without prescription) without asking your healthcare professional if they can be taken with other prescriptions.

Like all medications, pain medications can have side effects, which may appear within the first few hours or days of beginning treatment. As a rule these side effects disappear over time. Each person is different in his or her response to a medication. In some cases side effects will not occur. Some possible side effects are sleepiness, nausea, confusion and itching. Your physician can prescribe other medications to control these temporary side effects.

Constipation usually is a side effect of a narcotic that, unfortunately, does not go away with time. However, taking proper steps can make a difference. If starting a narcotic, you should also begin a bowel medication for constipation. Also, if possible, increase your fluids, and eat more fruits and vegetables and stay as active as possible. When someone is very ill, it is natural that he or she may decrease food intake and become inactive. Constipation can still be controlled with the right medications. In certain types of pain, your pain medicine may work best if given with other types of medicines. These medications help slow pain signals from specific sources of pain and help the pain medicines work more effectively.

Non-drug interventions may be helpful (with or without pain medications) in controlling your pain. Examples include relaxation techniques, massage, music or aromatherapy.

*Controlling your pain is your Home Care team's number one concern.*

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