

Pain Relief

during your hospital stay
Important to your recovery



What is pain?

Pain is an unpleasant feeling, such as soreness or discomfort, that is different for every person even if they had the same surgery. Pain can tell you when something is wrong with your body and when you need to ask for help.



Surgery, injury, and infections cause pain for most people because tissues are moved, cut and/or damaged. Pain that is not treated can be severe. It is important for your recovery not to have severe pain.

During your hospital stay, nurses and doctors will ask you to rate your pain. They want you to tell them when you are hurting and how much the treatments relieve your pain. You are the only one who knows how your pain feels. Your help is very important to getting the best pain relief possible.

How and when do I ask for help with pain?

It is very important for you to tell the nurses and doctors how much pain you are having, what it feels like, and whether treatments are working. **If your pain rating is 3 or more, please tell the nurse.**

1. A rating scale helps to tell us how much you hurt.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No Pain	Mild Pain			Moderate Pain			Severe Pain			Worst Pain

2. To ask for help, say to your nurse and/or doctor:
"My pain is 3/10 - I need something for pain"

Why is pain relief so important?

People usually have some pain after a surgery or injury. Severe pain can prevent you from moving and breathing properly and *can cause complications that make your hospital stay longer*. Severe pain can also become long term or chronic pain. It is important for you to have as little pain as possible to get well faster.

Good treatments are available to help relieve pain, especially medications. Other methods such as massage, deep breathing, and relaxation exercises also may help. Everyone's pain experience is different and you need to choose what works for you. You can use several methods at the same time.

People used to think that they had to "be strong" and "put up with severe pain." Now, doctors and nurses do not want you to do this because *unrelieved pain can slow your recovery*. Good pain relief is possible with your help.

How often should I ask for pain medication?

Medication usually relieves pain for about 4 hours. Therefore, to keep your pain rating as low as possible when you are moving and/or doing your deep breathing exercises, you need to take your pain medication every 4 hours. **You need less pain medication if you take it regularly** than if you wait until your pain is severe.



What drug treatments are available for **pain relief?**

A. Type: Medications such as acetaminophen, (Tylenol, Aftasol), antiinflammatories (Advil Naprosyn, Motrin), and opioids such as morphine or dilaudid are normally administered at regular intervals after your surgery to ensure an optimal pain management OR the lowest pain level possible. If your medication is not working, please ask for a stronger one.



B. Methods: Your medication will first be given by intravenous (IV) into the vein. Following this, once you are able to drink, pills will be used. Pills can be as strong as IV or needles. Some patients will control their own IV medications with a special pump that provides medication when you press a button (Patient Controlled Analgesia). If the pain comes back before the next dose of medication, ask for more pain relief. You may require more doses or stronger medication.

All methods require that you take the medication regularly for pain relief.

What non-drug treatments are available for **pain relief?**

There are several non-drug treatments that you can use to relieve your pain after surgery. Tell the nurse if there are methods that have helped you in the past. Patients have found the following helpful in addition to medications.

- Pillow(s) to support incisions during movement, breathing, and/or coughing;
- Advice on how to turn in bed and sit up;
- Massage;
- Music, reading, TV or other distracting activities;
- Application of heat or ice.

WHAT ARE PATIENTS' CONCERNS?

Many patients have concerns that stop them from telling someone about their pain and/or using pain medications.

HERE ARE SOME RESPONSES TO THESE CONCERNS

CONCERNS

I am not a "good" patient if I tell someone about my pain

- RESPONSES**
- "Good" patients DO tell when they hurt. You are a very important member of the pain management team and your help is needed. Please tell the nurse when you hurt and whether the pain treatment is working.
 - Nurses EXPECT you to tell them when you hurt. They do not want you to "handle it" by yourself. You are helping by telling nurses when you hurt and if your medication is not working. They want you to have as little pain as possible. Tell them anything that has helped you with pain in the past.
 - Pain does NOT mean you are healing. Unrelieved pain may slow healing and cause complications. People whose pain is well-controlled after surgery recover faster.

CONCERN

I don't have pain, I have "discomfort" or "soreness".

- RESPONSE**
- Pain can be called other names. Use the pain scale to rate your word for pain such as "discomfort" or "soreness". If your rating is 3 or greater, discuss with your nurse about taking a pain medication. Not every person uses the word "pain".

CONCERN

I don't want to have a needle.

- RESPONSE**
- Strong pain medication does NOT have to be given by a needle. If you are able to swallow, pills are the first choice for pain relief and are as efficient as injections.

CONCERNS

I am afraid to take pain medication because of addiction and/or side effects.

- RESPONSES**
- Addiction is not a problem. It is rare (<0.01%) for people taking medication for pain unless they already have a drug abuse problem. Advise your nurse or physician if this is the case.
 - Constipation is preventable. Constipation can happen with pain medications. To prevent a problem, most patients need to take a stool softener and/or laxative while on medication. Talk to the nurse if you are not being given these.
 - Nausea is treatable. Do not refuse to take pain medication because of nausea. Nausea may happen when you first take pain pills. The doctor has ordered medication that usually takes the nausea away. Ask your nurse for this.

REMEMBER

- Pain relief is important to your recovery
- Every person's pain is different
- You are expected to tell us about your pain
- Good methods are available to control pain



YOU ARE A VERY IMPORTANT MEMBER OF THE PAIN MANAGEMENT TEAM

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