

Every person has the right to have his or her pain managed. Even if the cause of the pain is unknown, every person's pain is real.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Pain

### What is Pain?

Pain is an unpleasant feeling and emotional experience that causes us to feel hurt and uncomfortable.

### What Can Cause Pain?

Injury, disease, and infection damage the body's tissues, which may cause pain. Anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma contribute to the emotional experience of pain.

### What Does Pain Feel Like?

Pain can be described as aching, burning, throbbing, stabbing, dull, sharp, cramping, or a squeezing sensation.

Each person experiences different types and levels of pain. Each person has a different threshold to pain.

### What Are the Different Categories of Pain?

- **Chronic Pain** is an ongoing long-term pain such as with arthritis, joint or muscle problems, headaches, or inflammations. Chronic pain can last weeks, months, or indefinitely.
- **Acute Pain** is a temporary pain associated with damage to the body resulting from an injury, surgery, infection, or burns. Acute pain can last days or weeks.
- **Breakthrough Pain** is pain that triggers you to take your pain medication. It can be moderate to severe with rapid onset. It can occur simultaneously with chronic pain. Breakthrough pain can also be thought of as pain flare.

### What Are Some Misconceptions About Pain Management?

Some people have misconceptions regarding pain management, including:

- Fear that pain medication won't work after a while
- Religious views about pain
- Not bothering the clinician about pain for the fear of being labeled unpleasant or difficult
- Cost of medicine
- Fear of side effects of pain medication; for example, being drowsy or constipated
- Fear of dependence on the pain medication

### How Can Pain Affect My Life?

Pain can affect us physically and emotionally.

- It can lead to increased fatigue and weakness, decreased strength and endurance
- It can affect our appetite, leading to nausea, weight loss, dehydration, poor or interrupted sleep, and delay recovery from illness
- Pain could cause us to change our outlook on life and may cause us to feel personal distress, cause difficulty in concentrating, depression, feeling helpless and hopeless, or it can make us fearful of losing control of our independence
- Pain can affect our personal relationships. It may cause decreased sexual interest and affection for those we love and to whom we are close.
- Pain can cause us to feel irritable and agitated
- Pain can cause us to feel angry spiritually, thinking we are being punished with pain because of something we may have done in the past

### What is Available to Help Control My Pain?

It is important that you establish good communication skills with your healthcare providers. This will help them assess the type of pain you have and determine the best plan of care to control your pain.

Use a Pain Diary to help keep a log of your pain activity. The Pain Diary will help you maintain a record of how your current pain treatment is managing your pain. Your Pain Diary is an excellent communication tool for you and your healthcare provider. It will help assess the level of your pain by ranging it on the pain scale.

### How Can I Use My Pain Diary Effectively?

The pain rating scale on your diary will help you to determine your threshold of acceptable pain. When you are assessing your pain, enter the date and time on the Pain Diary. To make the most of your assessment, you need to rate your pain before you take your pain medication and one to two hours after you have taken it. Contact your doctor if pain exceeds your acceptable level and becomes moderate to severe with your current pain medication. Refer to your Pain Diary when the nurse visits you or when you visit the doctor at his/her office.

### What Different Types of Pain Medication Are There?

- **Non-Opioids (NSAIDS, Aspirin, Tylenol, Aleve)** are usually the first types of pain medications to be used in pain management. These may be prescription or over the counter pain relievers. The most common types of non-opioid pain relievers are used for headaches, cramps, arthritis, or muscle pain. NSAIDS & salicylates (aspirin products) ease pain and reduce inflammation. Acetaminophen does not reduce inflammation. Common side effects of salicylates and NSAIDS are stomach upset and prolonged bleeding time. NSAIDS may cause renal problems or toxicity. A side effect from acetaminophen is liver disease.
- **Opioids (Narcotic)** such as morphine, hydromorphone, codeine, dilaudid, or methadone are usually recommended for moderate to severe pain. Opioids may be tried after non-opioids have been tried without success. These may be used for acute pain, chronic pain, and breakthrough pain. Some effects include constipation, difficulty urinating, slowed respirations, drowsiness, confusion, nausea, vomiting, and itching.

### What Other Methods Help Control Pain?

Medications	Relaxation and Meditation
Reflexology	Surgery
Use of heat or cold	Biofeedback
Immobilization	Acupuncture or Acupressure
Repositioning	Massage
Rest	Hypnosis
Implanted pumps	<i>(usually for severe chronic pain)</i>

### Should I be Fearful of Addiction?

Individuals may become fearful of becoming addicted to pain medications. Addiction occurs in less than .1% of the population and should not be a source of your fear or anxiety that would discourage you from taking your pain medication as your doctor has prescribed it. You should always discuss any concerns, fear, or anxiety you may have with your visiting nurse, doctor, or healthcare provider. While addiction is extremely rare, you should be aware of the following:

- **Addiction** is compulsive use of drugs for non-medical reasons. An addicted person craves mood-altering drugs, not pain relief. Addiction is denial of drug use, lying, stealing drugs, or using prescription drugs to get high.
- **Tolerance** occurs when the body becomes used to the dose of pain medication, therefore, the dose needs to be increased.
- **Physical Dependence** is defined by the development of withdrawal symptoms when opioids are discontinued or abruptly reduced. Physical dependence is normal and an expected response to continuous opioid use. Physical dependence does not mean addiction. Symptoms of withdrawal may include rapid heartbeat, sweating, insomnia, diarrhea, and agitation. Follow your physician's orders for stopping opioid use after long-term use.

