Pain Management

Control of your pain is an important part of your overall treatment. The type of pain and what works best to control it can be different for each person. There are many kinds of medicines and other non-drug ways to help with your pain.

It is very important to talk with your doctor about your pain and work together on a plan to help control your pain. Uncontrolled pain can affect your quality of life and your day-to-day activities.

Uncontrolled pain may affect your:

- Sleep
- Healing
- Ability to think clearly
- Work
- Daily activities
- Appetite

Uncontrolled pain may make you feel:

- Tired
- Stressed
- Worried
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Lonely
- Depressed

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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Facts About Pain Management

- Talking about your pain is not a sign of weakness or being a complainer. You have a right to have relief from pain.
- Only you know how much pain you have and how you feel.
- Pain should be treated early. Medicines work best when you take them when you first have pain. Stronger medicines should not be saved for later.
- When pain medicines are taken the right way, addiction is rare. People in pain have the most relief when they take their medicine as ordered by their doctor.
- Most pain can be well controlled with pain medicine. It may not be possible or safe to take the pain completely away. The goal is to help you be as active as possible. If you take too much pain medicine, the side effects from the medicine may make it hard for you to do your daily activities.
- Be sure you know how to take your pain medicine. Tell your doctor if you have any problems. The doctor may need to change or adjust your medicines to help control your pain.
- For chronic or longer lasting pain, your doctor may want you to take more than one medicine. You may need to see a pain specialist.

What are the common side effects from pain medicines?

- Some medicines may make you feel sleepy or drowsy. This usually goes away in a few days.
- Pain medicines may cause dizziness or confusion. Your doctor may need to change the dose or type of medicine to help with these problems.
- Constipation can be a side effect from taking opioids (narcotic pain medicine). Talk to your doctor or nurse about how to prevent or control constipation.

What should I tell my doctor about my pain?

- Where does it hurt? (location)
- What does the pain feel like? (burning, sharp, dull, stabbing, spasms, aching)
- How strong does the pain feel? (intensity)
- How long do you feel pain? How often does your pain happen? (duration)
- What makes the pain worse? (cause)
- What makes your pain better? What do you use for the pain? (relief)
Pain Scales

A pain rating scale is a tool you can use to help explain how much pain you feel and to set goals for pain relief.

Defense and Veterans Pain Rating Scale (DVPRS)

Choose the face that shows how much pain you feel or use the number under that face to rate your pain.
0 to 10 Number Pain Rating Scale

Choose the number that shows how much pain you feel. Use this number to rate your pain.

“Zero to Ten” Scale (0 to 10) for rating pain.

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No Pain                              Moderate Pain                         Worst Possible Pain


Faces Pain Rating Scale

Choose the face that shows how much pain you feel and use the number under that face to rate your pain.

Wong-Baker FACES Pain Rating Scale

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No Hurt            Hurts Little Bit          Hurts Little More         Hurts Even More          Hurts Whole Lot          Hurts Worst

Medicine Safety

Here is important information about pain medicine safety.

- Store your medicine away from children, pets and any other persons who should not handle the medicine. A locked cabinet or box is helpful to store medicine safely. In some cases, a locked cabinet or lock box may be needed at your home if you feel those around you may take or sell your medicine.

- When you are done taking a medicine, do not keep the medicine in your home. Talk to your pharmacist about the best way to safely get rid of medicine that is no longer needed.

- Only one doctor should prescribe your pain medicine. Use only one pharmacy for your prescription medicines so the pharmacist has a complete record of what medicines you take and can make sure your medicines can be safely taken together.

- Do not take any pain medicine that has not been prescribed for you. Do not let other people use your pain medicine.

- Read the label before you take medicine. Check the date on the label and get rid of any medicine that has expired.

- It is important to get rid of medicine when it is no longer needed to help keep the people and pets in your home safe. Call your city or county household trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available in your area.

When Should I Call My Doctor?

Call your doctor with the following concerns:

- If your pain is not controlled by pain medicine.

- If you need a prescription call the doctor’s office. Please call during office hours 2 to 3 days before the medicine is needed. Not all prescription medicines can be called into the pharmacy. Some pharmacies may not have the medicine in stock. It may take a few days to get the pain medicine order filled.

For more information on Pain Management, we encourage you to visit our video library at http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos.