



Patient Education Sheet

Pain Management

Why do I feel pain?

Pain is an unpleasant feeling that can be an ache or a sudden sharp stab. Physical pain is caused by tissue damage and it also involves the emotion felt when there is physical pain. Every person feels pain differently; however, whatever the person says he/she is feeling is his/her true perception of pain.

What is the difference between acute and chronic pain?

Acute pain is felt for a short period of time and then it goes away either with treatment or because of the body's own healing process. It may last from 6 to 12 weeks depending on the cause. Usually some type of injury causes acute pain.

When acute pain does not go away, it is called chronic pain. This type of pain lasts for 3 months or more, and can last for many years. It may be caused by:

- Cancer
- An old injury
- A chronic condition such as arthritis

Chronic pain may not completely go away, but it can be treated to reduce or alleviate the pain.

Why is pain management important?

It is important to control pain in order to carry out daily functions comfortably. Pain that is well managed allows for walking, doing breathing exercises and other activities that improve strength and prevent complications.

You can be involved in your pain management by doing the following:

- Discuss your pain management options with your healthcare provider.
- Let your healthcare provider know what pain medications worked best for you in the past or if you have had bad reactions/side effects to any that should be avoided.
- Let your healthcare provider know what makes the pain better and what makes the pain worse.
- Also discuss your comfort function goal. This is the level of comfort you need to be at in order to carry out your daily activities.

Why am I asked about pain?

Your healthcare provider will ask you what your "level of pain" is currently. Your pain level is based on a pain rating scale of 0 through 10. The staff will ask you frequently "On a scale of 0 to 10, what is your current level of pain?" The 0 is equal to no pain and the 10 rating is the worst possible pain you can imagine.

It is important to let your healthcare provider know before your pain level becomes severe. It is easier to manage your pain before becomes too intense. There are many ways to control pain such as relaxation, hypnosis, cold/heat therapy, or medication.

After your pain is treated, your healthcare provider will check that you are more comfortable.



What do I do if my pain treatment is not working?

It is important to let your healthcare provider know if you are not getting pain relief. Every person is an individual and reacts differently to pain. If you are not getting relief, your healthcare provider can recommend a new treatment.

How is the pain medication given?

Pain medication is given in different forms, such pills, patches put on the skin, injections, or by intravenous line directly into your vein.

Are there any side effects I should know about with my pain medication?

Depending on the medication, you may experience some side effects. These may include:

- Constipation—it is important to drink plenty of fluids (unless you are on a fluid restriction) and to eat a high fiber diet to prevent constipation.
- Drowsiness—many people experience drowsiness, or tiredness when taking pain medications. Once you are home, it is important not to drive or operate

any heavy machinery when taking pain medications, such as narcotics. It is also important not to make any important legal decisions until the effects of the pain medication have worn off.

- Dizziness—some people experience dizziness when they first take pain medications. While in the hospital, it is important to call for assistance getting out of bed to use the toilet or to walk after taking pain medications to prevent falling.
- Nausea—you might have mild nausea when taking pain medication on an empty stomach. Try taking the medication with food.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages while taking pain medication.
- Make sure your healthcare provider knows about all of the medications you are taking along with your pain medication.

Source:

Aspen Center for Patient Education. (2001). Pain Management: Patient Education Resource Manual, 2nd Ed. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publication.

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