

## Pain Management

There are many different causes and kinds of pain. Pain can be caused by injury, illness, sickness, disease, or surgery. Treating pain is the responsibility of your doctor, nurse, and other caregivers. You can help them by asking questions and finding out more about how to relieve your pain. This document has some questions and answers to help you do that.

### Questions to Ask Your Provider

- What pain medicine is being ordered or given to you?
- Can you explain the doses and times that the medicine needs to be taken?
- How often should you take the medicine?
- How long will you need to take the pain medicine?
- Can you take the pain medicine with food?
- Can you take the pain medicine with your other medicines?
- Should you avoid drinking alcohol while taking the pain medicine?
- What are the side effects of the pain medicine?
- What should you do if the medicine makes you sick to your stomach?
- What can you do if the pain medicine is not working?
- What else can you do to help treat your pain?

### Talking About Your Pain

#### Is it important for doctors and nurses to ask about your pain?

Yes. This is because pain changes over time or your pain medicine may not be working. Doctors and nurses should ask about your pain regularly.

#### What do you need to tell your doctor and nurse about your pain?

First, tell them that you have pain, even if they don't ask. Your doctor or nurse may ask you to describe how bad your pain is on a scale of 0 (zero) to 10 with 10 being the worst pain. They may use other pain scales that use words. Scales using colors, faces or pictures may be used for children. Tell them where and when it hurts. Tell them if you can't sleep or do things like dressing or climbing stairs because of pain. The more they know about your pain the better they can treat it. The words below can be used to describe your pain.

- |                  |             |             |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ▪ aching         | ▪ dull      | ▪ sharp     |
| ▪ bloating       | ▪ numbing   | ▪ shooting  |
| ▪ burning        | ▪ pressing  | ▪ soreness  |
| ▪ cramping       | ▪ pressure  | ▪ stabbing  |
| ▪ comes and goes | ▪ pulling   | ▪ throbbing |
| ▪ constant       | ▪ radiating | ▪ tightness |
| ▪ searing        |             |             |
| ▪ cutting        |             |             |

#### What can you do when your pain gets worse?

Tell your doctor or nurse. Tell them how bad your pain is or if you're in pain most of the time. Tell the doctor if the pain medicine you're taking is not helping.

### **Should you include pain medicine on your list of medicines or medication card?**

Yes! Even pain medicine that you will take for a short time should be listed with all of your other medicines. List all of your pain medicines — those prescribed by your doctor and those you buy over-the-counter on your own.

## **Managing Your Pain**

### **What can be done to treat pain?**

There are many ways to manage your pain. There are medicines that can be used to relieve pain. There are also other ways to treat pain without taking medicine. Your doctor will work with you to find out what works best for you.

### **What are some of the medicines used to treat pain?**

Some pain medicines are acetaminophen, aspirin, and opioids. Opioids include morphine, oxycodone, and hydromorphone. Many of these medicines come in pills, liquids, suppositories, and skin patches. Some pain may be treated with medicines that are not usually thought of as pain relievers. For example, antidepressants.

### **Are there other ways to relieve pain?**

That will depend on your illness or condition and how much pain you have. Sometimes pain can be relieved in other ways. Some other treatments for pain are listed here.

- Acupuncture, which uses small needles to block pain
- Taking your mind off the pain with movies, games, and conversation
- Electrical nerve stimulation, which uses small jolts of electricity to block pain
- Physical therapy
- Hypnosis
- Massage
- Exercise
- Heat or cold
- Relaxation

### **What are the side effects of pain medicines?**

It depends on the medicine. Side effects can include constipation, nausea, vomiting, itching, and sleepiness.

\*\* Constipation can be a significant side effect when taking narcotic pain medicines. It can include hard stools or not having a stool more than every 2-3 days. If you have a history of constipation or develop constipation, speak with your doctor or nurse on ways to prevent or treat constipation. You should have a stool every day or every other day.

### **What can you do if you have side effects or a bad reaction?**

Call your doctor or nurse as soon as you can. Find out what can be done to treat the side effect. Ask if there is another pain medicine that may work better for you.

### **Are you afraid to take a pain medicine?**

You may have had a bad experience taking pain medicine in the past, such as a side effect or bad reaction. Or you may be taking a lot of other medicines. Your doctor or nurse should be able to ease your fears.

### **Are you afraid that you'll become addicted to pain medicine?**

This is a common concern of patients. Studies show that addiction is unlikely. This is especially true if the patient has never been addicted. Talk to your doctor or nurse about your fears.

### **Are you afraid that your pain medicine won't work if you take it for a long time?**

This is called "tolerance." It means that after awhile your body gets used to the medicine and you need to make a change to get pain relief. It's also possible that the condition causing your pain is getting worse or you have a new type of pain. You may

need more medicine or a different kind of medicine to control your pain. Tell your doctor or nurse about your fears.

**Can you crush pills if you can't swallow them?**

Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Some medicines can be crushed and some cannot. For example, time-release medicines should not be crushed. Ask your doctor or nurse if the medicine comes in a liquid or can be given another way.

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