

What about Side Effects?

Pain medication can cause side effects. Side effects happen when you first start taking the medications and usually wear off after a short period of time. It is important to be aware of the side effects, so that you can report them to your nurse or doctor. Information about common side effects is provided below.

Constipation

Constipation is the most common side effect. It occurs because medication can slow down the function of your intestines. This can be prevented by drinking adequate fluids, eating foods high in fiber (whole grains, fruits and vegetables), keeping active (walking), and taking stool softeners or laxatives as directed by your physician.

Drowsiness

Drowsiness is a side effect caused by some pain medicines. It usually disappears in a few days, when your body has adjusted to the medication.

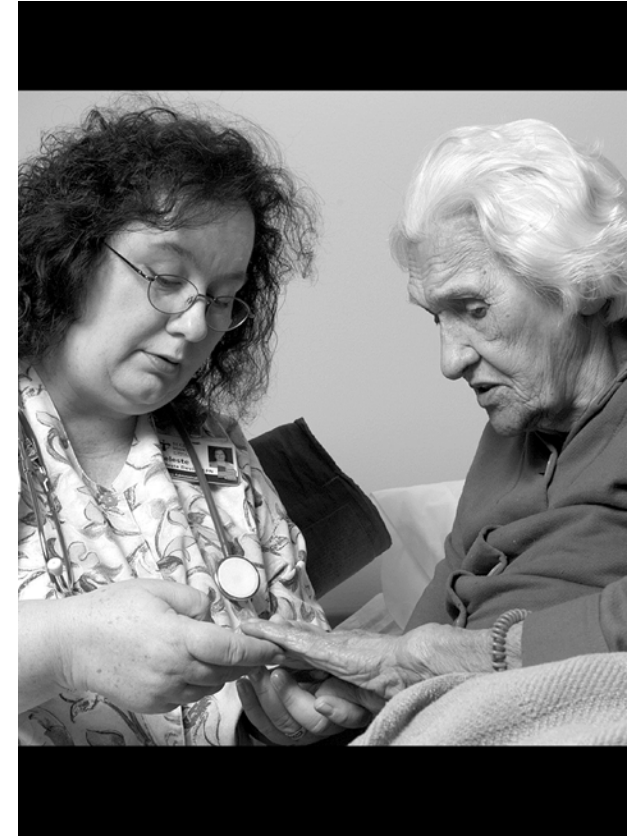
Nausea

Nausea is another side effect that can be caused by several things. Pain medication, pain itself, anxiety, other medications, or constipation can cause nausea. You can help control nausea by:

- Eating small amounts often and slowly,
- Avoiding fatty or fried foods,
- Using a straw to drink, and
- Resting after meals.

Dry Mouth

Dry mouth is another side effect of pain medications. Rinsing your mouth, drinking plenty of fluids or sucking hard candy will make your dry mouth feel better.



Managing Your Pain

A Guide for Residents and Families



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What is Pain?

Pain is your body's alarm system that tells you something is wrong. When a part of your body is injured, nerves in that area release chemical signals that go to your brain where they are recognized as pain.

People experience pain differently. The amount of pain you experience depends on the type and location of the pain, and how sensitive you are to pain. You may feel pain more quickly, or intensely, than someone else who has a higher tolerance for pain. Anxiety and fear can make the pain feel worse. You are the best authority to judge your pain and its relief.

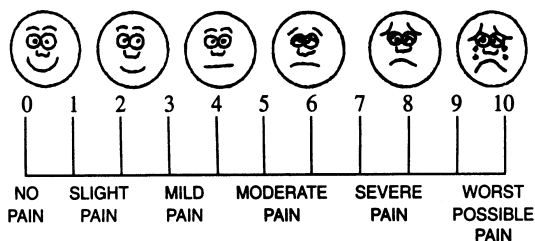
Your physician and nurse can work with you to choose the type of pain management that is best for you.

Describe Your Pain

There are two categories of pain:

1. Acute pain usually has a definite onset and does not last a long time. This is the type of pain you might have after a cut, burn, or sprained ankle. It usually subsides as the injury heals.
2. Chronic pain lasts for longer periods of time, such as arthritis, back pain, or cancer pain.

The Pain Rating Scale can help you describe how severe your pain is.



It is very important to tell your doctor or nurse everything you can about your pain so they can help you relieve it. When you are asked to describe your pain consider the following questions.

- When did the pain begin?
- What does the pain feel like (sharp, dull, throbbing)?
- Where is the pain?
- What type of pain (constant or intermittent)?
- What makes it worse (walking, coughing, moving, etc.)?
- What the pain prevents you from doing (sleeping, eating, socializing, etc.)?
- What relieves your pain?
- How severe is your pain according to the Pain Rating Scale?

Non-drug Pain Relief

There are several ways to manage pain with out medication. These techniques can be used alone, or in combination:

- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- relaxation techniques
- nerve stimulation
- heat and cold
- aroma therapy
- therapeutic activities
- meditation
- imagery
- music
- humor
- distraction
- exercises
- massage

Medications for Pain

Different types of medications control pain:

- Mild to moderate pain relief- acetaminophen, ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.
- Moderate to severe pain relief- codeine, morphine, and fentanyl
- Nerve pain relief- some antidepressants and anticonvulsants

Concerns about Pain Medication

Addiction

When you take pain medication for the control of pain, it doesn't mean you are addicted. It is unlikely that someone in pain will become addicted to pain medication no matter how much or how often they take the medication. Addiction to a medication is psychological, as well as, physical.

Physical Dependence

Physical dependence is not addiction. Dependence can occur when you take medicines over a long period of time. If you no longer need pain medication, your doctor will slowly decrease the amount over a few days to help your body adjust.

Tolerance

Medical studies show that it is better to take medication before pain gets too severe, otherwise, you may have to take more medication to relieve it later.

When you regularly take medicine around-the-clock, you use less medication. Around-the-clock means taking medicine at regular intervals during the day and night. This will maintain a more consistent level of pain control.

Tolerance means your body may need more medication to maintain comfort. It may occur when taking medication over a long period of time. This is normal and can be managed by your doctor and nurse.