

Communicate

Only you know how you feel—talk to your medical practitioner.

Describe where you feel pain—be specific.

- ◆ Describe your pain (e.g. sharp, dull, burning, throbbing, steady, intermittent).
- ◆ Describe how severe your pain is (rate it 1 out of 10, with 10 being the worst pain imaginable).
- ◆ Describe how often you have pain (e.g. daily, nightly, weekly).
- ◆ Describe the impact your pain has on your daily activities (e.g. work, sleep, appetite, personal relationships, hobbies).
- ◆ Describe what you have tried to relieve your pain (e.g. over-the-counter medications, traditional and non-traditional therapies to date).
- ◆ Describe if your pain changes over time; your pain medicine may not be working.

Treating your pain is a partnership between you and your medical practitioner. Ongoing follow-up and communication are essential parts of this partnership. When the patient is a child, this partnership requires special cooperation between the child, the parents and the practitioner.

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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.

Questions To Ask Your Caregivers:

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

Information was adapted from The Joint Commission, New York's Medical Conduct Program, and the New York State Department of Health.

Pain Management A Guide for Patients



Introduction

As a patient it is your right to have your pain addressed by your medical practitioner.

Pain has many consequences for the individual sufferer, as well as society as a whole, and is a public health concern. Pain severely impacts the quality of life for the pain sufferer, their family and their community. Business and industry incur significant losses due to employee absenteeism, reduced productivity and increased health care costs.

There are three general categories of pain.

- ◆ Acute (short-term) pain, such as that associated with accidents and surgery.
- ◆ Chronic (long-term) pain, due to cancer, AIDS or terminal illness.
- ◆ Chronic pain, due to long-term conditions that are not terminal, such as back .

The management of any type of pain needs to be individualized, and is best done in consultation with one's medical practitioner. The information presented in this brochure is designed to help you work with your practitioner in obtaining the best management of your pain as possible.

You Should Know

1. It is considered good medical care for you to receive proper management of pain after receiving an appropriate assessment as to the cause of the pain. Once the cause is derived a proper plan of treatment of the pain can be accomplished. This plan of treatment should be discussed routinely.
2. Pain is best managed when you receive various forms of therapy which combine in their effort and relieve the pain. Physical therapy, exercise, weight loss, manipulative therapy, yoga and acupuncture all play an important role in pain management.
3. Controlled substances such as narcotic medications do play a role in the treatment of pain. Because these medications can possibly result in serious side effects, they should be used in the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible time for your condition.
4. Addiction to narcotic medications can become a serious, unintended consequence of treatment. It is very important to realize this fact and to discuss frequently the effects of these medications with your medical practitioner.

You Should Know

5. Inform your practitioner about any past history of substance abuse.
6. Medication side effects are usually dose and time related and can be controlled with dosage adjustments or changes in the medications used.
7. Any reduction or loss of effectiveness in a medication's effect on your pain must be discussed with the practitioner.
8. Never take pain medication that is not prescribed to you. Never share your prescription with others. It's dangerous and illegal.
9. Not every medical practitioner is equipped and trained to care for patients with all types of pain. You should talk to your practitioner about other specialists and other treatment options.
10. In most cases pain relief may not be immediate.
11. Not all pain can be completely relieved even with the combination of therapies involved in the treatment plan.

More information can be found at:
www.jointcommission.com
www.stopoverdose.org
www.takeasdirected.com