



Pain Management

A guide for patients

Most pain can be managed with medicine and other treatments. This guide gives information about controlling pain and talking with your care providers so we can find the methods that work best for you.

Your Rights and Responsibilities

As a patient, you have the right to have your pain:

- Taken seriously by all your caregivers
- Checked on a regular basis
- Dealt with quickly

You are responsible for:

- Asking about your pain relief options
- Describing and rating your pain
- Asking for medicine when your pain first begins
- Telling us if the medicine or treatment worked

What non-drug methods can help ease my pain?

Talk with your care provider to learn more about:

- Hot/cold packs
- Positioning
- Music therapy
- Relaxation and imagery
- Therapeutic touch
- Hypnosis



Please tell your care providers about your pain levels.

What medicines will be used to manage my pain?

- Over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin, and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin)
- *Opioids* such as morphine
- Local *anesthetics* (medicines that block pain signals at nerves)

How will I receive pain medicines?

Pain medicines may be given by:

- Mouth (pills, capsules, liquid)
- A bandage-like patch placed on your skin
- A needle placed in your vein (*intravenous* or IV line)
- A *patient-controlled analgesia* (PCA) machine that allows you to control your IV medicine
- A small tube inserted in your back in the area around your spinal cord (*epidural catheter*)

Why is it so important to manage pain?

If pain is not relieved, it can delay your healing by:

- Making it hard for you to rest or sleep
- Making it hard for you to breathe deeply, cough, or walk
- Causing you to lose your appetite
- Making you sad or anxious by trying to deal with your pain alone

Please tell your care provider when your pain is not under control.

How to Talk with Your Healthcare Team

- Ask us what to expect:
 - Will there be much pain after surgery or with my illness?
 - How long is it likely to last?
- Talk about your pain control options:
 - Tell us what pain control methods have worked well in the past.
 - Tell us how you use drugs or alcohol. You may need your medicine dose adjusted.

- Talk about any concerns you have about pain medicines, such as fear of addiction.
- Ask about side effects that may occur with treatment.
- Learn about the tools you can use to measure your pain. See the pain scales on page 4.
- Ask for pain medicines when you first begin to feel pain.
- Tell your provider if you have new pain or pain that won't go away.
- Include your family or support persons in making a pain control plan.

Concerns about Pain Medicines

I don't want to seem like a complainer.

You have a right to ask for pain relief. Your providers need to know about **all** your symptoms, including pain, to give you good care.

I'll have terrible side effects.

Most side effects like nausea, itching, sleepiness, or constipation can be resolved by changing the medicine, changing the dose, or adding simple treatments.

I might get addicted.

When pain medicines are used as prescribed, patients rarely become addicted to them. If your doctor prescribes strong pain medicines called *opioids*, take them only if needed, and only as prescribed. We will give you more information about these medicines and also teach you how to taper your dose. (See "About Opioids" on page 5.)

Tell Us About Your Pain

Tell your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, and family or friends:

- Where you feel pain
- What it feels like (sharp, dull, throbbing, etc.)
- How strong the pain feels
- If the pain is always there or if it comes and goes
- What makes the pain worse
- What makes the pain better

Pain Scales

We use pain scales to help our patients describe their pain.

Please use one of the pain scales shown below to help you tell us how much pain you feel. You can choose a number, or a word, or a face. Use the pain scale that works best for you.









Choose a **NUMBER** from 0 to 10 that best describes your pain:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No Pain										Worst Pain

OR, choose a **WORD** that best describes your pain:

No Pain	Mild	Moderate	Severe
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OR, choose a **FACE** that best describes your pain:

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

Face scale from Wong DL, Hockenberry-Eaton M, Wilson D, Winkelstein ML, Schwartz P: Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing, 6/e, St. Louis, 2001, P. 1301. Copyright by Mosby, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

About Opioids

What are opioids?

Opioids are strong pain medicines. They are used to treat moderate to severe pain that may not respond well to other treatments.

Here are the answers to some common questions about opioids. Please ask for our handout “Opioid Safety and Pain Control” to learn more.

How much medicine should I take?

Follow the dose written on the prescription bottle. If your pain does not get better, call your provider to talk about changes in your pain medicine or dose.

How long does it take the medicine to start working? How long will it last?

- **Fast-acting** medicines such as *oxycodone* and *morphine* start working in about 30 minutes. They last about 4 hours.
- **Slow-release** medicines such as *Morphine SR* and *Oxycontin* start working in about 60 minutes. They last 8 to 12 hours. Swallow these medicines whole. Do **not** crush or chew them.

What are common side effects caused by opioids? How can I avoid them?

- **Constipation:** To help prevent constipation, drink plenty of water, and take a stool softener such as *docosate* (Colace). If you become constipated, use a laxative such as *senna* or *milk of magnesia*. If the problem continues, call your provider.
- **Drowsiness:** Avoid alcohol and other medicines that make you sleepy. They will add to the drowsiness caused by the opioids. Do **not** drive or use machines while taking opioids.
- **Nausea:** Take the medicine with food if it upsets your stomach.

How do I get a refill of my pain medicine?

Many opioid pain medicines require a new prescription each time you need a refill. Your pharmacist can tell you if you can get refills of your pain medicine or if you need to call your provider for a new prescription.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

UW Medical Center patients:

Call 206.598._____

Or, call the main UWMC operator at 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Resident on call for your doctor.

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center patients:

Fred Hutch General Oncology:
206.667.5000

Fred Hutch Women’s Wellness
Clinic: 206.606.1422