

### Sharing your Care

If you have suggestions for improving your pain management, share this information with your HCT. They will welcome your ideas and input.

### Useful Websites:

[www.britishpainsociety.org/](http://www.britishpainsociety.org/)



## *Patient Information Booklet On Pain Management*

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## Patient Booklet on Pain Management

The management of pain is the responsibility of every member of your medical or nursing team. We believe that you have a right to appropriate pain control. This booklet is offered as a tool to help you and your health care team (HCT) work together to manage your pain and will explain:

- The importance of pain control.
- How pain relief affects your recovery as well as your comfort.
- How you can participate in choosing options for treating your pain.

### What Is Pain?

Pain is an unpleasant sensation. It causes physical, psycho-social and psychological distress to the person. Each person perceives a particular pain stimulus in their own unique way.

The intensity of the response to a pain stimulus is largely subjective. The meaning and the severity of the pain is accurately defined by the person with the pain rather than by observers. Our individual pain perception can vary at different times, even in response to an identical stimulus.

### Pain can be divided into two types:

#### Acute pain

This is a pain of sudden onset, lasting for hours or days, which disappears once the underlying cause is treated.

It is often a useful alarm signal that something may be wrong in your body.

Most pains get better on their own or with simple treatment.

Moderate to severe pain may be a sign of something more serious, such as a broken bone. This pain is helpful because it means that you get treatment and rest until your break has had chance to heal.

## Pain Medication Tips

It is important for your HCT to know which prescription and non-prescription medications, alternative therapies, and herbal supplements you take.

This is because there may be an adverse reaction.

- It is a good idea to keep a current list of all your medications with you.
- It is important to know how and when you take your medications.
- Your pain medication will work best when you take it at the prescribed intervals.
- Ask your HCT, or your nurse, how and when to take additional doses e.g. for break through pain
- The whole aim of regular medication is to prevent you experiencing pain.
- If one medicine or treatment does not work, tell your HCT
- Always remember to always keep medications in a safe place and out of the reach of children.

### Worried About Pain?

You are always welcome to discuss your concerns with your HCT.

Here are some common worries:

- ***I am afraid I will become addicted.***  
When pain medications are taken in the right way, patients rarely become addicted. Your HCT will explain the safe use of pain medicines
- ***Will I seem like a complainer if I ask for pain medicine?***  
You have a right to ask for pain relief. The sooner you ask the better. It is much easier to control pain in the early stages.
- ***Will pain medications make me lose control?***  
Most people do not experience loss of control when they take pain medicines as prescribed. You may feel drowsy when you first take some medicines, but this should go away after a few days. Let your HCT know if you experience unpleasant side effects.

## Pain medications that may be prescribed:

### Non-Opioids:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen
- Diclofenac

These reduce inflammation and may lower your temperature.

### Opioids

- Morphine
- Tramadol
- Codeine

These control moderate to severe pain

### Adjuvants

- Muscle relaxants
- Antidepressants
- Anticonvulsants

These are usually prescribed in combination with the above.

If you have any side effects or allergies related to these, or other medications, please tell your HCT.

## 2. Without Medicine:

You may need help to learn the following techniques yourself from your HCT.

**Relaxation:** e.g. visual concentration, rhythmic breathing, or massage.

These relieve pain by reducing muscle tension and anxiety.

**Distraction:** e.g. reading, arts, crafts.

These focus your attention away from the pain.

**Imagination:** e.g. creating mental pictures or situations.

This is a positive use of your mental capacity that may help things to feel better.

**Skin Stimulation:** e.g. massage, pressure, hot or cold compress.

These can re-root neuropathways and thereby lessen the pain.

**Group Therapy:** It is often the case that working alongside others helps you find release from your pain.

## Chronic Pain

Chronic pain is usually defined as:

- Pain that continues for more than 3 months beyond the usual recovery period for an illness or injury, or
- Pain that goes on over months or years as a result of a chronic condition.

Chronic pain ranges from mild to severe.

It may be related to such things as arthritis, back problems, persistent headaches, or other conditions. But sometimes the cause is not clearly understood and we simply treat the pain.

Chronic pain appears to serve no useful purpose, but has a huge impact on the lives of people.

### It can:

- stop you working
- stop you enjoying your hobbies
- stop you enjoying your social life
- interfere with your sexual life
- interfere with your role within your family

## Important Notes about Pain

**Pain is always subjective.**

- There are effective methods of reducing and relieving most pain.
- Your HCT is better able to help when you tell them about your pain.
- Pain rating scales are useful tools to help you communicate the intensity of your pain.
- Pain medication can help you cope better with an illness or injury.
- Well-controlled pain will enable you to do those activities, like walking and breathing exercises, which help you regain your strength and improve your overall recovery.
- Not all pain can be relieved completely. However, through communication between you and your HCT until an acceptable level of pain control can be achieved.

### What Should You Expect From Your HCT?

- Information about pain and pain relief methods
- Commitment to pain prevention and management and a timely response to your report of pain
- That your report of pain will be believed
- Appropriate pain treatment methods and reasonable access to pain management specialists if needed

### What Is Expected of You?

It is to your benefit to take an active role by:

- Asking what to expect regarding pain and pain management
- Discussing pain relief options with your HCT
- Working with your HCT to develop a pain management plan
- Asking for pain relief when pain first occurs
- Telling your HCT if your pain is not adequately controlled

### Describing Your Pain

Different types of pain may require different medications or other methods of relief. It will help your HCT if you can provide the following descriptions of your pain:

#### ▪ Location

Where is it? Does it spread or move to any other part of your body? Can you point to it?

#### ▪ Quality

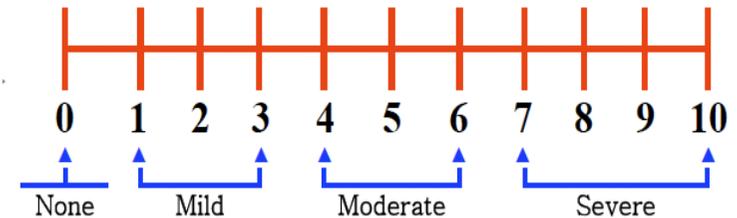
What does it feel like? For instance, is it sharp, dull, burning, searing, aching, cramping, shooting pain?

#### ▪ Intensity

Is the pain constant or does it come and go?

### Pain Scale:

This pain scale can help you measure your pain and set goals for relief.



### Other factors that may be relevant are:

- How the pain started?
- How long you have had this pain?
- What kinds of activities make the pain better or worse - walking, sitting, standing, or lying down?

### How Is Pain Relieved?

Medicine and other treatments can almost always relieve acute pain. Most pain is relieved by one of two methods:

#### 1. With Medicine

Pain killing medications prescribed by your doctor may be used in combination with other medications to achieve good pain relief. Medications that are used to relieve pain can be given in a variety of ways:

- By mouth
- By rectum
- By injection or infusion
- By epidural catheter
- By skin patch

Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) is a method offered to inpatients of giving pain medication using a machine that you control when you feel pain.