

Caregiver's Corner



Pain Management for the At-Home Caregiver

Are You Managing Pain Effectively?

Pain. It is something that you can feel at any time in any place for any reason. It is the body's way of responding to illness, injury, or even stress, a natural response to certain medical interventions, such as surgery.

There are two basic types of pain: *acute pain*, which usually occurs suddenly and passes quickly, and *chronic pain*, which can persist or recur over weeks, months or even years. Acute pain can change your heart rate, raise your blood pressure, or cause you to breathe rapidly, among other things. Chronic pain may not cause intense pain that will do these things, but it can cause weight loss, depression, or difficulties in sleeping or eating.

People experience pain in different ways. It is important that doctors and other caregivers have information pain when it occurs. At right, you will find a pain inventory questionnaire which may help you define the severity of pain. Being able to define pain will help your loved one's doctor prescribe the best medications, drug dosages and therapies for any pain they may be experiencing.



Pain can be managed in many different ways — both with and without medications. When taking pain medication, one may experience tolerance of a medication and it no longer works effectively. If this occurs, it is important to address the issue. A doctor may adjust the dosage accordingly or prescribe a different medication.

Some methods of handling pain without using medication including massage, hot or cold packs, ultrasound, acupuncture and biofeedback. Pain can also be lessened with certain relaxation techniques, such as listening to music, positive imagery, or hypnosis.

Experiencing pain offers no known benefits, yet some people insist on “experiencing” it, believing that without pain, there is no healing. It is a proven fact: *there is no healing benefit provided by pain itself.* If your loved one is having unexpected pain, or the pain control methods you are using are not working, call the doctor or visiting nurse. If not treated, pain can affect many areas of the body, and could result in increased fear, anxiety and sleeplessness.

More information about pain is available on-line by visiting www.pain.com.

Inventory Your Pain

Being able to answer these questions may be helpful to your doctor:

- 1. Have you had any pain today (other than minor headache, toothache, etc.)?*
- 2. In what area/s of the body do you feel the most pain?*
- 3. Using a scale of 1 - 10, 1 being “no pain” and 10 being “as bad as I can imagine”, rate your pain right now.*
- 4. Using the same scale, rate your pain at its worst in the last 24 hours. Also, at its least in the past 24 hours. And on average in the last 24 hours.*
- 5. What treatments or medications are you taking right now for pain, and how often?*
- 6. Has the pain interfered with your work? Your activity level? Your mood? If so, how?*
- 7. Is the pain affecting your sleep cycle?*