

Managing Your Pain

Everyone feels and reacts to pain in different ways. How you feel pain can depend on what has happened to you in the past and how worried you are about what is causing your pain.

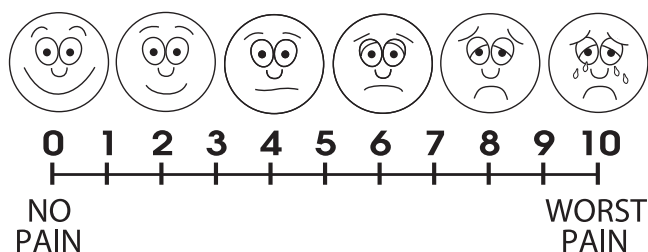
The two pain schedules below are ways that nurses and doctors can understand how you are feeling.

The scales mean the same thing, but the first uses words and the second uses pictures. The scale starts at the left at "0" or no pain, and goes up to "10," or the worst possible pain.

Verbal Descriptive Scale

- 0 = no pain
- 1-3 = mild pain
- 4-6 = moderate pain
- 7-10 = worst pain possible

Face Scale



If You Are Admitted

When you are admitted to the hospital, your nurse will ask you how much pain you are willing to accept in order to move around in bed, walk, cough, breathe deeply and sleep. This is called the goal for pain management.

During your stay, your nurse will often ask you about your pain to make sure the pain level is acceptable. They will also ask where it hurts and how it feels. Here are a variety of words to describe the pain: cramp, sharp, ache, burning, dull, constant and off-and-on. Your doctor and nurses will compare your pain goal and the way you describe pain to decide what type of medicine and other pain relief methods to use.

When you leave the hospital, your nurse will talk with you about safe ways to take care of your pain at home. Do not be afraid to take pain medicine when you need it, following the directions on the bottle. Short-term use of the medicine is not addictive. If you are worried about this, ask your doctor to explain.

You are the only one who knows how much pain you feel and what makes you feel better. Be honest with your nurse

or doctor. Do not worry about being brave or bothering the nurses. Taking care of pain is important for your health and well-being. Remember: It is very important for your nurse and doctor to know if the pain medicine does not help or if your pain suddenly changes.

Pain Relief

Pain medicine works best when you relax.

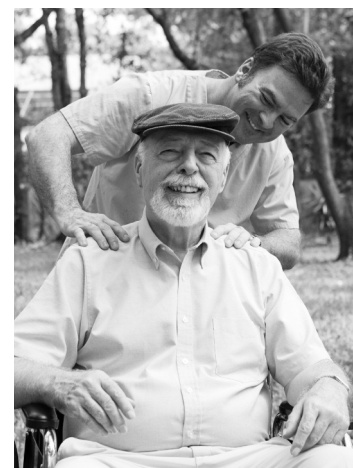
- Place a pillow where your body hurts. This supports the painful area and is helpful when deep breathing and coughing after surgery.
- Use cold or warm packs to ease your pain.
- Breathe in and out slowly to relax tight muscles when you get out of bed or a chair. Take a breath before you move, then slowly breathe out as you get up or move.
- Listen to soft music.
- Talk with someone; for example, staff from Pastoral Care or Social Services.

If You Are Scheduled for Surgery

Ask about your pain before your surgery.

Before and after surgery, ask questions about pain management. Knowing how much pain to expect may help you feel more in control and less afraid of surgery. Here are some of the questions you may ask your nurse or doctor before surgery.

- **How much pain should I expect? What is normal?**
- **How long does the pain usually last?**
- **Which pain medication will I receive? What choices do I have?**
- **Will the pain medication be given to me as a pill, shot or an IV (in the vein)?**
- **How often will I be given the medication?**



If you have had pain medicine that did not work well, or if you had side effects such as vomiting, itching or blurred vision, be sure to tell your nurse and doctor.

After your surgery, it will be important that you move about and breathe deeply to keep your lungs clear. Your doctor may change this medication to make sure you can do this.