

Pain Control: A Priority at Madigan Army Medical Center

What is pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that tells you something may be wrong in your body. When there is an injury to your body (surgery, broken bones) or if you have a painful disease or condition (sickle-cell disease, arthritis, cancer), these tiny cells send messages along nerves into your spinal cord and then up to your brain. Pain medicine blocks or lessens these messages.

Who experiences pain?

People of all ages experience pain. Newborn babies feel pain, as do children, adolescents, and adults. It is important to remember that the elderly also experience pain. Pain is not just part of getting older.

Will I definitely have pain when I'm in the hospital?

Not all patients admitted to the hospital experience pain. However, if you do have a painful condition or are having surgery, the members of your health care team will need your help to manage your pain effectively. Effectively managing pain is a team effort and you are a very important part of that team.

What are the benefits of good pain control?

- Enjoy greater comfort while you heal.
- Get well faster. With less pain you can be more active, start walking, do

your breathing exercises, and get your strength back more quickly. You may leave the hospital sooner.

- Improve your results. Patients whose pain is well controlled seem to do better after surgery. They may avoid some problems (such as pneumonia and blood clots) that affect others.

What are my options for pain control?

Both drug and non-drug treatment can be successful in helping to prevent and control pain. Work with your doctor and nurses to choose the method that is best for you. We want to make you as comfortable as possible. You are the key to getting the best pain relief because pain is personal.

Will I become addicted to the pain medication?

It is very unlikely that you will become addicted to the pain medication when used as prescribed by your physician. Studies have shown that becoming addicted to pain medication is very rare unless you already have a problem with drugs.

How are pain medications given?

There are various ways that you may receive your pain medication.

- By mouth – Pain medication may be given as tablets, capsules, or liquids for you to take by mouth.
- As a shot or injection – The nurses may give you your pain medication as

a shot into a large muscle in the arm, leg or buttocks.

- In the vein (intravenously) – Pain medication may be injected periodically into the IV tubing.
- Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA) – This allows you to push a button to receive a dose of pain medication, which is delivered through an IV.

What do I need to do to make sure I get the best pain control possible?

- Ask your doctors and nurses what to expect
 - Will there be much pain after surgery?
 - How long is the pain likely to last?
- Talk to your doctor about pain control methods that have worked well for you in the past and those that have not.
- Tell your doctors and nurses about any allergies you have to medications.
- Ask about side effects of the medication.
- Tell your doctors and nurses about any other medications you take for other health problems.
- Talk about how often you can receive pain medication while in the hospital.

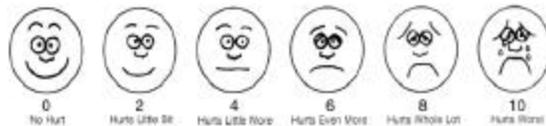
- Work with your doctors and nurses to make a pain control plan that will meet your needs.

When should I ask for pain medication?

Ask for pain medication when your pain first begins. If you know your pain will worsen when walking or doing breathing exercises, ask for pain medication first. It is harder to ease pain once it has taken hold. This is a key step in proper pain control.

How can I tell you if my pain is better or worse?

The doctors and nurses will help you “measure” your pain frequently. They will ask you to rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst possible pain. Some people, including children, can point to a picture of a face that depicts the pain they are feeling. Reporting your pain as a number or as a face will help the nurses and doctors know how well your treatment is working and whether or not changes need to be made.



If you or your child have been using a different pain scale to rate pain just let the staff know how to use your personal pain scale.

How can I manage my pain at home?

When it comes to effective pain management, the tips that you learned at the hospital will also work at home.

- Use your medication only as directed. If the pain is not relieved or if it gets worse, call your doctor.
- Remember that oral medications need time to work. Most oral pain relievers need at least 20 minutes to begin to take effect.
- Try to time your medication so that you take it before beginning an activity.
- Pain relievers can cause constipation. If you don't have a bowel movement in two days, please contact your physician. Remember to drink plenty of fluids.
- Some pain medications can cause drowsiness. Avoid driving or other activities that require alertness when taking narcotic pain medications.
- Do not drink any alcoholic beverages when you are taking narcotic pain medication.

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