



Managing Your Pain

Here at Central Peninsula Hospital, it is important to us that you are as comfortable as possible. Pain can be relieved most of the time. Good pain relief can help you be more active and help you in your recovery.

What can you do to get good pain relief?

Talk to your doctors and nurses about your pain. We cannot always tell when you are having pain. Therefore, it is important to let your doctors and nurses know when you are in pain.

Point to where the pain is located.

Describe how the pain feels: aching, throbbing, or burning. There may be many ways to describe your pain.

Rate your pain on a scale of 0-10, with 0 meaning no pain and 10, the worst pain you could imagine.

List pain medicines you have taken in the past and how well they have worked for you.

Tell your doctor and nurse how well your current pain medicine is working.

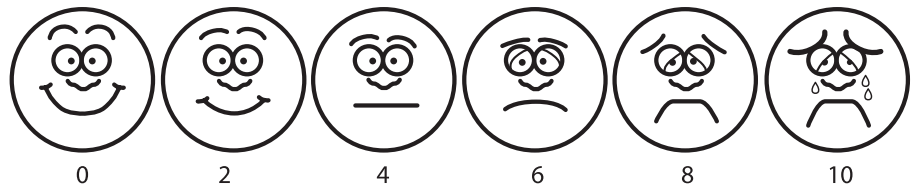
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No Pain

Moderate Pain

Worst Pain

It is important to let your doctors and nurses know when you are in pain.



What medicines are used to relieve pain?

Many different medicines can be used to treat pain. The choice of a medicine is based upon your type of pain. In general, there are three types of pain medicines.

Nonopioids: These medicines include acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and anti-inflammatory drugs (also called NSAIDs, such as aspirin and ibuprofen, also called Motrin® or Advil®). Some of these medicines are available without a prescription. Be certain to ask your doctor before taking any medicines that have not been prescribed.

Opioids: Sometimes called “narcotics”, these medicines are used for moderate to severe pain.

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continued



Other Medicines: These medicines are used for other problems, but are useful in relieving pain. For example, some anti-seizure drugs and antidepressants can reduce pain. Local anesthetics (such as Novocaine®) can often be helpful. Steroids can be used in some types of pain.

How should I take my pain medicines?

Instructions will be given to you about your pain medicine. Pain medicines can be taken as a pill or liquid. These can be just as powerful as injections. Oral pain relievers, such as acetaminophen, and anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen, should be taken with a full glass of water to speed up their action and to reduce side effects. Most oral pain medicine begins working in 20-30 minutes; with full effect noted in about 2 hours. If you cannot swallow, or your stomach cannot digest well, medicines can be given by injection into the vein (intravenous) or in the skin (subcutaneous). Other methods are also available.

When should I take my pain medicines?

It is best to take your pain medicine before the pain becomes severe. Once pain becomes severe, it is more difficult to relieve. Many people find it helpful to take pain medicine before walking or other activities that may trigger pain. This prevents the pain before it starts. When pain is constant, medicines may be given on a regular schedule to keep the pain under control.

Will I become “hooked” on the pain medicines?

Research shows that most people do not become “hooked” or addicted to pain medicines when used as directed by their doctor. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have a history of drug addiction or if you are concerned about taking your pain medicines for any reason.

Are there side effects to pain medicines?

All medicines have side effects, but not all people get them. Most side effects happen in the first few hours of treatment and slowly go away. These might include nausea and vomiting, sleepiness and constipation. Your doctors and nurses can give you medicines to prevent or treat these side effects.

Are there other ways to relieve pain?

Many people find that cold packs, heating pads, and massage, healing touch or physical therapy help reduce pain. Music or television may distract you from the pain. Relaxation and breathing exercises can be helpful. If you would like to try any of the treatments mentioned above, ask your nurse to help you access these treatments.

These are some of the most commonly asked questions about pain. Remember, the doctors, nurses and other staff members at Central Peninsula Hospital care about your comfort. If you have other questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

– Adapted and used with permission of Northwestern Memorial Hospital - Chicago IL