

Pain Management

Working Together To Manage Your Pain

The University Health Service (UHS) is committed to providing excellent care. Preventing and treating your pain or discomfort are important aspects of your care. This fact sheet provides information on how to prevent and manage any pain that you may have.

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that comes from injury, disease, or damage to your body. Pain is your body's way of sending a warning to your brain. When your body gets hurt, signals are sent along nerves into your spinal cord and up to your brain. Pain medicine blocks these signals to your brain so the pain can be relieved or decreased.

Sometimes pain is a nuisance, or it may, in fact, be a signal that something serious is wrong. Pain that is not treated may cause you to feel anxious, depressed, tired, or moody.

YOUR RIGHTS – AS A PATIENT

- A primary care provider who responds quickly to your reports of pain.
- Regular assessment for the presence of pain.
- Safe and timely treatments to relieve pain.
- Ongoing evaluation of the pain treatment plan.
- Information about medicines and other ways to manage your pain.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES – AS A PATIENT

- To inform your primary care provider (PCP) when you are having pain
- To assist your PCP in assessing your pain
- To talk with your PCP about pain relief options.
- To participate in a pain prevention and management plan.
- To participate in the ongoing evaluation of your pain

MANAGING YOUR PAIN

Pain can often be controlled with good assessment, planning, and patient/family input. Become a partner with your primary care provider by discussing:

- What to expect about how your pain can be managed and treated.
- Your past experiences and response to pain.
- A pain management plan that is appropriate for you.
- Allergies you have to medications or foods.
- All medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter, herbal, and prescription medications.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

- How much pain is common with this type of procedure or surgery?
- Where should I expect to feel pain?
- What medicines will be used to treat the pain?
- How often can I take the medicine?
- Is there anything else besides medicine that may help me feel better?

MEASURING YOUR PAIN

Pain is personal. Your input is the key to getting the best pain relief. To assess the intensity of your pain, we often use a scale such as the one below:

Pain Scale										
----- Mild-----			---Moderate---				----Severe----			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No									Worst	
Pain									Possible	
									Pain	

Using a pain scale to report your pain can help your primary care provider (PCP) know how well your treatment is working and whether to make any changes in your plan of care. Contact your PCP as soon as pain begins or if the pain does not go away after treatment. Your PCP will take actions to help you feel better and will check to make sure the action(s) is working.

MEDICINES TO RELIEVE PAIN

Medicines to relieve pain can be given in the form of pills, patches, or injections in a vein. There are many different types of pain medicine, and they all work in different ways. If you have pain, your primary care provider will work with you to find the pain medicine that will work best for you.

Your primary care provider will discuss with you the risks and benefits of any pain medicine you choose to take. Ask questions if you have any concerns. Sometimes, it is best to combine medicines or to change the dosage or method of giving the medicine in order to relieve the pain.

OTHER PAIN RELIEF METHODS

- Cold or warm packs as specified by your PCP.
- Nerve stimulation devices as specified by your PCP.
- Relaxation techniques, such as listening to music, slow, deep breathing, and the use of visual imagery to calm yourself.
- Patient/family education about your health problems and treatment options.
- Help from family and friends.
- Special religious or cultural practices.

TREATMENT

Participate fully in planning how to manage your pain. Check with your primary care provider about:

- Your pain treatment plan.
- Any limits you may have while taking certain medicines or receiving special treatments.
- How to take your medicines (e.g. with food or on an empty stomach).
- When to report any changes or problems with your pain.
- Who to call if you cannot deal with your pain.

SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT

Call 275-2662 to schedule an appointment at the University Health Service (UHS). UHS offers a full range of services. All visits to UHS are confidential.