

Cancer Therapy Series: Pain

Not everyone who has cancer has pain. But, if you do have pain we want to work with you to find the best way to treat your pain.

What it is and why it happens

Pain may be caused by cancer or other problems such as an infection. Some side effects from chemo can cause pain. These include burning, numbness, and tingling or shooting pains in your hands and feet. Mouth sores, headaches, muscle pains, and stomach pains can also occur.

Doctors and nurses have ways to decrease or relieve your pain. That's why you should speak up and let your health care team know if you are having pain.

Ways to manage

Talk about your pain with a doctor or nurse. Be specific and describe:

- Where you feel pain. Is it in one part of your body or all over?
- What the pain feels like. Is it sharp, dull, or throbbing? Does it come and go, or is it steady?
- How strong the pain is. Describe it on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is no pain, and 10 is the worst pain you have ever had.
- How long the pain lasts. Does it last for a few minutes, an hour, or longer?
- What makes the pain better? For instance, does an ice pack, heat or certain medicine help?
- What makes the pain worse? Are there things that cause the pain?
- Which medicines you take for pain. Do they help? How long do they last? How much do you take? How often?

Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse if you have pain.

For a copy of the book, "Pain Control," from the National Cancer Institute, call our Health Librarian 216-286-4636 or scan the QR code.



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Let your family and friends know about your pain. They need to know about your pain so they can help you. If pain is bothering you, they can call your doctor or nurse for you. Knowing about your pain can also help them understand why you may not be acting the same.

Practice pain control

- Take your pain medicine as prescribed. Keep a diary of when you take your pain medicine and how much you take. If your pain medicine is not working, call the health care provider who prescribed it and let them know.
- Try deep breathing, yoga, or other ways to relax. This can help reduce muscle tension, anxiety, and pain. You may also want to try heat, cold or changing positions.

Ask to meet with a pain or palliative care specialist. This can be a doctor or nurse who talks with you about ways to better control your pain.

Let your doctor, nurse, or pain specialist know if your pain changes. Your pain can change over time. When this happens, your pain medicines may need to be changed.

Be aware of pain medicine side effects. Side effects from pain medicine may include constipation, nausea and sleepiness. It may not be safe for you to drive or use heavy machinery. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions or concerns about these side effects.

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- New pain that you didn't have before or pain that feels different
- Pain that doesn't get better or go away when you take your pain medicine(s)
- No bowel movement for 2 full days
- Problems keeping food or fluids down for more than 12 hours because of nausea or vomiting
- Problems with being too sleepy, such as napping all day, or falling asleep while talking
- Questions about how much pain medicine to take or how often to take it



This info is a general resource. It is not meant to replace your doctor's advice. Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.