

Pain Control

People used to think that pain was something they “just had to put up with”. This is no longer true. Today you can work with your nurses and doctors to prevent or relieve pain.

Pain control can help you:

- Be more comfortable while you heal.
- Get well faster. With less pain your body works better. It is easier to fight infection, and you get your strength back faster. You may even leave the hospital sooner.
- Improve your results. People 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.

Communication brings the best results:

After surgery or a procedure, your goal is to get better. Pain relief plays a big part in your recovery. Your doctors and nurses will be counting on you to tell them about your pain. You are the only one who can describe your pain or whether pain relievers are working. For the best relief, be honest when you are asked how you are feeling. Don't worry about being a “bother”. Also, don't worry about getting “hooked” on pain medicines. Studies show this is very rare. Pain medicines tend to work best when taken regularly, before pain becomes severe. The medication can be adjusted to meet your needs. Finding out what works best for you is what really matters. For best results, work with your doctors and nurses to choose the pain control methods that will work best for you. You are the key to getting the best pain relief because pain is personal. The amount or types of pain you feel may not be the same as others feel, even those with the same kind of problem.

Describing your pain:

Tell your doctors and nurses exactly what your pain feels like. For example you pain may be:

- Sharp
- Shooting
- Burning
- Constant
- Aching
- Pounding
- Deep
- On-and-off

Use a pain scale:

Help others to understand your pain by rating it on a scale of 0-10. (0 = no pain, 10 = the most severe pain.) The use of pain rating scale helps your doctors and nurses to measure your pain. Reporting your pain as a number helps you and the staff to know how well your treatment is working and whether to make changes. See the back of this pamphlet for pictures of three types of scales you can use to describe your pain.

You may find it helpful to set a pain control goal (such as having no pain that is worse than 4 on the scale). Your nurses and doctors may help you set a pain control goal.

Pain relief medicines:

Several types of drugs are used to treat pain. These include anti-inflammatory drugs, opioids and locally acting anesthetics. In addition to pain relievers, you may receive other medicines to help make you comfortable. Some medicines may help you relax, to reduce your anxiety, or to sleep. Other medicines can help reduce nausea and vomiting, which are possible side effects of some pain medications.