



Working Together to Relieve Your Pain

Pain is an individual sensation. Pain exists whenever a person says it does, and it feels however a person describes it. The goal of this information is to help you, as a patient, talk to your doctors and nurses about pain. When we know more about your pain, we can treat it more effectively.

The nursing philosophy of pain management

This is what nurses at the Clinical Center believe when they care for patients in pain.

1. I care.
2. I believe your pain is real.
3. I understand your pain makes you act certain ways.
4. I want to talk to you about what you think will help your pain.
5. I want to discuss with you what your pain means to you.
6. I am willing to stay with you, even if I cannot help relieve your pain.
7. If you do not feel comfortable with me as a care giver, I will try to find someone else for you.*

The pain relief chart

You will be given a “Pain Relief Chart” on which to mark your perceptions of pain. This chart measures pain using a scale of 0 to 10: 0 means no pain, 10 means the worst possible pain. It is important to fill out this chart regularly so that your nurse can keep track of your

pain. When you describe your pain with a number before and after medication or treatment, nurses can adjust your medications so that you have the most pain relief. It is easier to prevent a small amount of pain from increasing than it is to reduce pain that has become severe. Be sure to tell your nurse about pain before it becomes unbearable.

Alternatives to pain medication

There are other ways to relieve pain besides the use of medication. These include the following:

Imagery

This method uses your own memories of peaceful events or develops your own thoughts to decrease the intensity of pain. Athletes use imagery to picture themselves winning.

Cancer patients imagine chemotherapy killing cancer cells.

Relaxation techniques

Muscle tension, anxiety, and pain are uncomfortable feelings. Each of these feelings individually can intensify the other and create a vicious cycle. Relaxation techniques may help you interrupt this cycle. These techniques include meditation, yoga, music, and religion. The use of relaxation techniques does not imply that your pain is not real, but it may help you decrease your anxiety or fear related to pain so that it does not worsen.

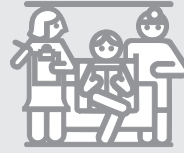
Distraction

This method focuses a person’s attention on something other than the pain. This technique is most effective with pain that is short-lasting, for example, injections and blood drawings.

TENS

These initials stand for “transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation.” It works by patches applied to the skin. These patches transmit impulses that block the pain felt by targeted nerves.

If any of these alternative pain relief measures interests you, please ask your nurse for more information.



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Sample Pain Relief Chart*

Patient

Pain relief goal

Time/Date	Pain rating	Pain medication./treatment	Respirations	Alertness/Level of awareness	Comments/Alternative pain relief measures

Pain rating: 0 - 10 (0 = no pain, 10 = worst pain)

* adapted from McCaffery M, Beebe A. *Pain: Clinical Manual for Nursing Practice*. St. Louis, 1989. The C.V. Mosby Company.