

Patient Education And Caring: End-of-Life (PEACE) Series

This is general educational information, see your doctor about your own care.

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American College
of Physicians

American Society
of Internal Medicine

190 N. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1572
215-351-2400, 800-523-1546
www.acponline.org



*W*hen You Have Pain at the End of Life

Many people with cancer and other serious illnesses have pain.

Pain often makes it harder for you to deal with your illness. Pain robs your energy and enjoyment of life.

A lot has been learned about how to treat and even prevent pain.

*F*or More Information

American Pain Foundation
111 South Calvert Street, Suite 2700
Baltimore, MD 21202, 800-492-3805
www.painfoundation.org

Beth Israel Medical Center
Department of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care
First Avenue at 16th Street
New York, NY 10003, 212-844-8970
www.stoppain.org

Hospice Net
www.hospicenet.org

Important Things to Know About Pain

You are the only one who knows how much pain you are having. Tell your doctor.

Pain can usually be eased to make you comfortable and awake. Some people will need to be asleep to be comfortable.

There are many treatments for pain. Each approach has different benefits, side effects, and financial costs. Side effects can often be helped or prevented. If cost is a problem, sometimes there are less expensive alternatives.

Work with your doctor to find the care that is right for you. Right now, a lot of what we know comes from treating cancer pain. You may need to see a pain specialist.

There are many possible treatments for pain, including:

- medicines
- physical therapy
- massage, heat or cold
- acupuncture
- hypnosis and biofeedback
- injections of anesthetics
- surgery and radiation

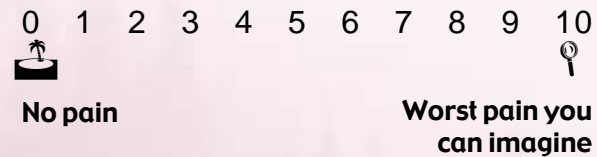
Pain medicines can come as:

- pills
- patches that you put on your skin
- liquids
- infusions under the skin or into a vein
- suppositories

Keep a Pain Diary

Write down and tell your doctor where, how much, and when you hurt.

Measure your pain with this scale:



Write down the number that stands for how much pain you're having. Then, an hour after you take your pain medicine, write down the number of your pain.

Keep this information as a diary. Have the numbers with you when you talk with your doctor in person or on the phone. This will help your doctor know the right medicine for you. Your doctor can change the medicine to help you feel more comfortable.

Important Things to Know When Taking Pain Medicines

You do not have to tough it out. Pain medicines really help.

You will not become an addict if you take a strong pain medicine like morphine. Remember, addicts take drugs to escape from life—you are taking medicine to get back into life.

Your medicine dose will be changed if your pain increases. You may get a little sleepy at first, but soon after that you will be alert as before. Ask your doctor when it is safe to drive a car or take over-the-counter sleep medicines or drink alcoholic beverages.

If your pain is present most of the time, your doctor will probably tell you to take pain medicine on a regular schedule to keep the pain from returning. It is better to prevent pain than to wait for it to get bad.

Certain medicines may cause constipation. Your doctor can recommend laxatives and other treatments that can help.

Financial and family worries, anxiety, depression, and religious or spiritual concerns can make your pain harder to bear. There are people who can help, such as a social worker, psychiatrist or psychologist, or pastor, rabbi, or other spiritual leader.