



About Cancer Pain

If you have cancer, you may worry about having pain. About 1 out of 3 people treated for cancer will feel pain. But some cancers don't cause any physical pain.

Pain can affect your life in many ways. It can get in the way of your daily activities. It can be very trying when your family and friends don't know how you feel.

Pain can make you feel

Tired

Depressed

Angry

Irritable

Lonely

Stressed

Pain can cause problems with your

Daily activities

Interest in work and hobbies

Sleep

Eating

Relationships with friends and family

Enjoyment of life

Cancer pain can be treated.

There are many kinds of drugs and non-drug methods that can help relieve your pain. **You should not accept pain as a normal part of having cancer.** Each person's pain is unique. If you have pain, the treatment for it must work for you. Once pain is controlled, people can eat and sleep better, enjoy being with family and friends, and often go on with work and hobbies.

Many people are afraid to take pain medicines because they don't want to become addicted. It might help you to know that addiction is very rare in people treated for cancer-related pain. Others are afraid of bad side effects. But your health care team can help you prevent or control most side effects.

Why people have pain

People with cancer may have pain in a certain part of the body, or they may not feel well overall. Maybe they just can't get comfortable. Sometimes pain can be caused by the cancer pressing on a nerve, bone, or organ in your body. Cancer treatment and its side effects can also cause pain. Or you may still have pain that has nothing to do with cancer, like a headache or arthritis.

Tell your doctor or nurse about your pain.

Only you know how much pain you have. Some people with cancer find it hard to talk about their pain. Telling your doctor and nurse when you have pain is important. If you wait until the pain is really bad, it's much harder to control it.

Your health care team needs to know:

- When did your pain start?
- How often do you have it?
- Where does it hurt?
- How strong is the pain?
- What does it feel like? Is it sharp, dull, throbbing, steady, burning, etc?
- What makes it worse, and what makes it better?
- How much relief do you get from medicines you now take?

Ask your doctor or nurse:

- What's causing my pain?
- What can you give me to relieve my pain?
- How and when should I take the medicine and for how long?
- Do I need to take the medicine with food or extra fluids?
- How long should it take for the medicine to work?
- What side effects are common? What should I do if I have side effects?
- What should I do if the pain medicine doesn't help? Can I take more? How much?
- Will the pain medicine limit things I can do, such as working, driving, etc.?
- Is it safe to take my other medicines with the pain medicine?
- What else can I do to help relieve my pain?

You should know:

- Cancer pain can almost always be relieved.
- Treating your cancer pain is part of your cancer treatment.
- The best way to control pain is to keep it from starting or getting worse.
- Telling your doctor or nurse about pain is not a sign of weakness.

- You have a right to ask for pain relief.
- People who take pain medicines for cancer pain rarely become addicted to them.
- Most people do not get “high” or lose control if they take pain medicines the way their doctors tell them to.
- Side effects from pain medicines can be managed and often prevented.
- Your body does not become immune to pain medicine. Stronger drugs should not be “saved for later.”
- Drugs for pain affect people in different ways. A very small dose may work for some, while others may need a much larger dose to get pain relief.
- Only one doctor should give you pain medicine. If one of your doctors changes your medicine, they should make sure the others know about it.
- Pain medicine should not be shared. Never take someone else’s medicine or allow others to take yours. Drugs for pain that worked for you in the past may not be right for you now. Drugs that helped a friend or relative may not be right for you. And some drugs may not mix well with other drugs you are getting as part of your cancer treatment.

You are in charge of your pain control plan and it can be changed at any time. To learn more about how to talk with your doctor about pain, keep track of your pain medicines, and other things you can do to help manage pain, call us anytime, day or night, at **1-800-227-2345**

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1-800-227-2345 or www.cancer.org