

Managing Your Pain in the Hospital

What Is Pain?

Pain is your body's natural way of telling you that something may be wrong. You can experience pain as a result of an illness, injury, or a surgical procedure.

Pain can feel like burning, stabbing, throbbing, aching, or pinching. It can be steady or occasional. Pain can be emotional, the result of anxiety, or physical.

Fear of Pain

If you are sick, just had surgery, or are injured, you may be afraid of feeling discomfort or pain. The fear and anxiety can make your pain worse. It is important to remember that your healthcare team will provide medication and other ways to manage your pain.

Realistic Expectations of Pain Control

While you are sick in the hospital or after surgery, you can expect to have some amount of pain. Having no pain while in the hospital or right after surgery is not realistic.

A realistic goal is to identify the amount of acceptable pain you can tolerate while still allowing you to rest comfortably.

Your healthcare team will frequently ask you about your level of pain to help you manage it. You will be asked to give your pain a number based on how comfortable you are and what activities you are able to perform by using a Comfort Scale like the one below.

Comfort Scale (Pain Assessment Tool)

0 Pain Free	1 Very Mild	2 Discomforting	3 Tolerable	4 Distressing	5 Very Distressing	6 Intense	7 Very Intense	8 Utterly Horrible	9 Excruciating Unbearable	10 Unimaginable Unspeakable
No Pain	Minor Pain			Moderate Pain			Severe Pain			
Feeling perfectly normal	Nagging, annoying, but doesn't interfere with most daily living activities. Patient able to adapt to pain psychologically and with medication or devices such as cushions.			Interferes significantly with daily living activities. Requires lifestyle changes but patient remains independent. Patient unable to adapt pain.			Disabling; unable to perform daily living activities. Unable to engage in normal activities. Patient is disabled and unable to function independently.			

My Pain Goal Is:

(Acceptable Level of Pain)



Alternatives to Pain Medication

You may receive medications to help manage your pain.

But, there are other ways to manage your pain.

- Ice packs
- Heating pads
- Massage
- Repositioning with additional blankets and pillows
- Relaxation
- Music
- Physical therapy
- Deep breathing
- Meditation