

Caring for the Hospice Patient

A Guide to Pain Management

Pain Control: Pain treatments work differently for different people. It is important that you keep your doctor and Hospice nurses informed about the patient's pain level and how they are responding to the medications and treatments prescribed.

Information that should be shared with the nurse at the initial nurse visit:

- Any allergies to medication.
- Pain medications previously taken.
- Which medications that have helped in the past.
- Any non-medication treatments that help relieve pain such as heat or massage.
- Any fears or concerns you or the patient have regarding the use of medications.

Pain Medications: There are many medications available to treat pain. Certain medications work better to relieve different types of pain. A combination of medications may be needed for the most effective relief.

For Mild Pain Non-opioid Medications: Tylenol, Aspirin, Ibuprofen.

For Moderate Pain Non-opioid and Opioid Medications in Combination.

For Severe Pain Opioids: Morphine, Oxycodone, Dilaudid, Duragesic.

Combinations of other drugs refers to the use of antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and steroids in the treatment of pain. It does not mean that the patient is depressed or is going to have convulsions, but these types of drugs have been found to be very helpful in the treatment of tingling or burning sensations related to nerve pain.

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Taking Pain Medications: Most pain medications are taken by mouth (orally) in the form of tablets or liquid. If it is hard for the patient to swallow, there are other ways to take medications. With rectal suppositories, the medicine dissolves in the rectum and is absorbed by the body. Patches are filled with medicine and can be placed on the skin where they will be absorbed through the skin over a period of many hours. Transdermal gels are prepared by a compounding pharmacist and can be rubbed onto the skin to be absorbed directly into the blood stream without needing to be digested. The subcutaneous injection is medicine that is placed under the skin using a small needle. With intravenous injections, the medicine is placed directly into the vein through a needle. Injectable medications are used infrequently in Hospice care.

Nondrug Treatments of Pain: The patient may want to try other treatments along with medications to provide even more pain relief. Biofeedback, breathing and relaxation, imagery, massage, music therapy, hot or cold packs and rest are few examples of treatments that may help.

Pain Management: To help pain medicine work best the medications should be taken as ordered by the doctor to keep the pain under control. Do not skip a dose of medication or wait for the pain to get worse before providing medication. The goal is to prevent the pain. Once the patient feels the pain, it is harder to get it under control. There are many different medicines and treatments that can be used. If one medicine does not work, there is another one that can be tried. Talk with the doctor or Hospice nurse. They will work with you to find the pain medicine that will help provide the most relief.

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Pain can affect a patient in many ways. It can prevent them from being active, sleeping well, enjoying family and friends and from eating. Pain can also make them feel afraid or depressed. With treatment, most pain can be lessened or controlled. When there is less pain, your loved one will probably feel more active and interested in doing things he or she enjoys.

If the patient is feeling pain, you need to tell the doctors and Hospice nurses right away. Getting help for the patient's pain early can make pain treatment more effective.

Have the Patient Describe Their Pain:

- Clearly describing pain will help in choosing the best treatment.
- Different kinds of pain require different kinds of treatment.
- Does pain interfere with the patient's activity, mood, sleep, appetite, or emotions?
- What **kind** of pain is the patient having? There are many different kinds of pain. Ask the patient to think of words that describe what the pain feels like such as, **aching, stabbing, burning, tingling, shooting, nagging, pressing, crushing, pinching, cramping, or squeezing.**
- How **much** pain is the patient having? Describe by using Pain Rating Scale below:

Pain Rating Scale

Please select the number that best describes your pain

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



No pain

Mild

Discomforting

Distressing

Horrible

Excruciating

