

WHAT IS PAIN?



Pain is the perception of an unpleasant experience (aches, soreness, burning, discomfort, etc.) arising from actual or potential tissue damage. Pain is one of the most widely under-treated health problems. It can cause depression, anxiety, irritability, disruptions in sleeping, eating, mobility, and overall ability to function. **You are the best authority of your pain.** The pain scale below is frequently used to communicate pain levels and guide pain relief. Please become familiar with it.

TREATMENT GOALS

Our goal post-operatively is to help you quantify pain so we can decrease it. Total pain relief is desirable but sometimes reducing pain to a tolerable level is more realistic. Treating pain at its onset is more effective than waiting until it worsens. Your body produces pain-relieving substances (endorphins and enkephalins) but there are many medications available that can be used to help reduce your pain. These medications include: opiates (codeine, oxycodone, morphine, hydromorphone, fentanyl, meperidine), non-opiates (aspirin, acetaminophen, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), and supplemental medications. In addition to medications, there are alternative ways to relieve your pain. These include:

- Altering your environment – Have people around you with whom you can relax; use subdued lighting and comfortable room temperature; use fresh, clean clothing and bedding; apply heat or cold if your doctor okays it;
- Humor and distraction – Watch a funny movie; listen to an interesting story. Think positively about getting better.
- Use relaxing images.
- Elevate affected extremity above the level of your heart.
- Engage in mild exercise and stretching as indicated.

With good pain control, you can enjoy greater comfort while you heal, get well faster with less pain, and improve your surgical results as well as avoid some problems associated with some recoveries.

AFTER DISCHARGE

If your physician orders pain medication for you, we encourage you to take it as soon as pain begins. If you know your pain will worsen when you start increasing your activity, take your pain medicine first to help reduce that onset. You may find it helpful to take your medication on a regular schedule to reduce the peaks and valleys that may occur with delayed administration and pain intensity increasing.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
None	MILD PAIN, ANNOYING - Pain is present but does not limit activity.		NAGGING PAIN, UNCOMFORTABLE, TROUBLESOME - Can do most activities with rest periods.		MISERABLE PAIN, DISTRESSING - Unable to do some activities because of pain.		INTENSE, DREADFUL, HORRIBLE PAIN - Unable to do most activities because of pain.		WORST PAIN POSSIBLE, UNBEARABLE - Unable to do any activities because of pain.	
	I have to stop and think to see if anything hurts. It does on closer examination.		I am aware of the pain. I might take an over-the-counter medication for it. I can accomplish most tasks with some adjustments.		I may be uncomfortable enough to consider seeking advice from a healthcare professional.		This pain I'm having is severe enough that I cannot concentrate or sleep or may be unable to stay still or find a position of rest.		The worst pain I can imagine having (this may be different than the worst pain I've ever had). This pain cannot get any worse.	

PATIENT IDENTIFICATION