

Managing Pain

Cancer pain is caused by the cancer itself, the treatments being used, or a combination of both. Major causes of pain come from: medical tests, tumors, spinal cord compression, treatment: chemotherapy, radiation, neuropathic (damage to the nerves), or phantom pain (coming from a body part that has been removed). **Pain is personal and can only be defined by YOU!**

How it Works: The sensation of pain is transmitted through the nervous system to the brain. The brain then sends out special proteins, called endogenous opioids to mark the surface of the affected cells. The body sends out endorphins to block the pain but sometimes this is not enough. Healthcare providers prescribe pain medications.

Terms to Know

Acute Pain: Varies in severity and lasts only for a short period of time.

Chronic Pain: Varies in severity and is constant or comes back often.

Tolerance: When more medication is needed to achieve the same amount of pain relief.

Dependence: When the body has adapted to the use of the medicine and presents with withdrawal-like symptoms after the medicine dose is changed abruptly or stopped suddenly.

Addiction: Psychological and behavioral changes that result in the use of medication for non-pain reasons.

Short-acting Pain Medications: Relief that lasts 2-4 hours and is most beneficial for acute pain.

Long-acting Pain Medications: Relief that lasts from 8-24 hours and used to treat chronic pain. Often given names with XR, ER, XL (extended release), CR (controlled release), LA (long acting).

Breakthrough Pain: An intense increase in pain level that happens suddenly or occurs for a short period of time.

Common Medications & Side Effects

Morphine, Dilaudid, Demerol, Codeine, Hydrocodone (Lortab, Vicodin), Oxycodone (Percocet, Percodan, Oxycontin, MS-Contin)	Constipation, nausea, vomiting, sedation, mental clouding, dry mouth, sleep disturbances
Acetaminophen, Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Toradol	Mild gastrointestinal upset and bleeding. Check with provider before taking.
Patches (Lidocaine, Fentanyl)	Redness, swelling, skin changes at site of patch.

Complementary Therapies

- **Massage/Reflexology**
- **Therapeutic Touch/Reiki**
- **Guided Imagery/Relaxation/Meditation**
- **Hypnosis**
- **Expressive Arts**
- **Exercise/Physical Therapy**
- **Acupuncture**
- **TENS**

Results vary from person to person, practitioner to practitioner and disease to disease

Vitamins & Herbal Remedies

Talk with your provider before you begin using these:
These have good to moderate scientific evidence for pain relief

- **Generalized Pain:** Jasmine, Lavender
- **Nerve pain:** Magnesium, Thyme
- **Muscle Pain (Topical):** Camphor, Capsaicin, Comfrey, Peppermint, Rosemary
- **Joint Pain:** Bromelain, Juniper, Rose

Home Remedies

- **Heat Therapy:** Good for sore muscles. Apply heat for 10 minutes, remove for 10-20 minutes before applying again, if needed. You can fill a large boot sock with uncooked rice and microwave it for two minutes. Can also try gel packs, hot water bottles, warm moist towels.
- **Cold Therapy:** Good for reducing inflammation. Cold packs should be wrapped in at least 1 layer of cloth before being applied. Application/reapplication same as heat.
- **Exercise/Stretching** Remember to speak with your provider before starting an exercise program. Start with gentle exercises/stretching first.

Helpful Reminders

- Establish a pain plan with your healthcare provider; consider palliative care for pain management.
- Maintain a pain score sheet/diary. Note the location, intensity, and duration of the pain; what relieves pain and what makes it worse.
- Stay ahead of your pain by taking medications on time.
- Talk to your provider when there is a change in the intensity, duration, or location of pain.
- When on pain medication: eat a high fiber diet, drink more fluids, and if needed, use an over-the-counter stool softener.
- Do not apply heat over patches or other topical medications.
- Avoid consuming alcohol while on pain medication.
- If you feel the pain medications are interfering with your daily activities, contact your provider.