

What to Do for Cancer Pain

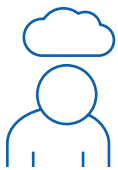
Pain is your body's way of telling you that something is wrong. Only you know when you have pain and how it feels. Having cancer does not always mean that you will have pain. And if you have pain, it can be caused by things other than cancer. All pain can and should be treated. Tell your cancer care team about your pain right away; it is easier to treat pain when it first starts.

When cancer pain is controlled, you become more comfortable and do more of your normal activities, such as being able to move around more, sleeping better, and finding more interest in the things you used to enjoy.



Cancer pain can be caused by

- The cancer itself
- Cancer surgery, treatments, and tests



Pain can affect all parts of your life.

- You may not be able to do the things you need to do.
- You may have trouble sleeping and eating.
- You may feel tired or “down” most of the time.
- You may be cranky, frustrated, sad, and even angry.



Some facts about cancer pain treatment

- Cancer pain most likely can be controlled.
- The best way to control cancer pain is to keep it from ever starting and keep it from getting worse.
- Taking cancer pain medicines as instructed by your cancer care team helps to control the pain.
- Most people do not get high or lose control when they take cancer pain medicines the way they are told to.
- There are things you can do to manage or even prevent side effects from pain medicines.
- There are things you can do to manage pain without medicines.



Pain medicine

There are many medicines, many ways to take the medicines, and many treatments without drugs that can help relieve your pain. Work with your cancer care team to find the cancer pain treatment that works best for you.

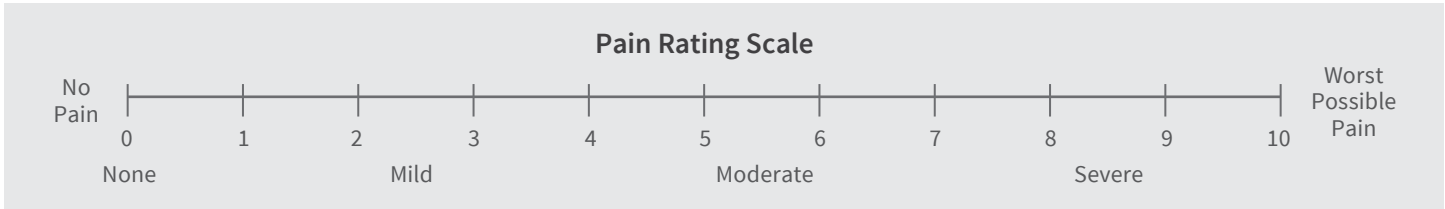
Here are some questions you may want to ask your cancer care team about pain medicine:

- How much medicine should I take? How often can I take it?
- If it doesn't work, can I take more? If so, how much?
- Should I call you before taking more?
- What if I forget to take it or take it too late?
- Should I take my medicine with food?
- How long does it take the medicine to start working?
- Is it safe to drive or operate machinery after I have taken pain medicine?
- What other medicines can I take with the pain medicine?
- What medicines should I stop taking while I'm taking the pain medicine?
- What side effects could I have from the medicine, how can I prevent them, and what should I do if I have them?
- Are there things I can do to help relieve pain without medicine?



How to talk about your pain

Use a pain scale to explain how much pain you have.



Describe your pain.

Some words you might use are:

- Dull
- Sharp
- Aching
- Throbbing
- Burning
- Shooting
- Stabbing
- Numb

Tell your cancer care team:

- Where you have pain
- How long it lasts
- What makes it better or worse
- If it stops you from doing things you want to do
- What you have tried to make the pain better and whether it worked



Talk to your cancer care team

Talk to your cancer care team if pain doesn't respond to treatment, gets worse, or you can't get out of bed for more than 24-48 hours.

For cancer information and answers, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

