



# How to manage your pain

UHN

## Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn about:

- Why it is important to manage pain
- Options to help manage it
- Who to talk to if you feel pain

## Why relieving your pain is important

You will get better more quickly if your pain is well controlled.

Less pain means less stress on your body. Your body heals better with less stress. You can breathe deeply and cough and move more easily.

Less pain will decrease your risk of problems such as:

- infection
- trouble breathing
- muscle spasms
- heart attack

Your health care team will work with you to help you manage your pain.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)  
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Author: Anesthesiology and Pain Management  
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## **Who to talk to about your pain**

Please tell someone on your healthcare team if you are feeling pain. You can talk to anyone—your doctor, your nurse, your physiotherapist or occupational therapist. They all work to help you get relief from your pain.

We also have a special team called the Pain Service, which is available 24 hours a day to help us to help you. The team is made up of nurses and doctors. They are specialists in pain management. They can offer different medicines and methods to manage your pain.

## **How to tell us about your pain**

Describe your pain to your healthcare team using a scale between 0 to 10.

**“0”** means **no pain**

**“10”** means **the worst pain you can imagine**

You can also use words like mild, moderate or severe to describe your pain.

## **How much pain relief can I expect?**

Pain is different for everyone. Your healthcare team will help you decide what works best for you. Remember that you are the expert on how well your pain is being managed. Together, we will make sure that you have as little pain as possible. We will also make sure you have as few side effects as possible from the pain medicine.

## **What are the side effects of pain medicines such as morphine?**

Some side effects are:

- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Vomiting (throw up)
- Feeling itchy (often on more than one area of your body)
- Feeling sleepy
- Mental clouding (hard to think clearly)
- Slowed breathing
- Constipation

These side effects can be managed. Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any of these side effects.


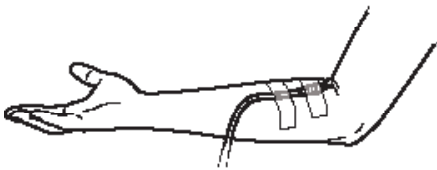
## Can I get addicted to pain medicine such as morphine?

Unless you were addicted to it before, it is very unlikely you will develop an addiction to the pain medicine. About 1 in 1000 people will get addicted to strong pain medicine like morphine when they take it to relieve their pain. So, use as much pain medicine as you need to relieve your pain.

## When should I ask for pain medicine?

- **When your pain just starts to become uncomfortable.**  
Don't wait until the pain is bad.
- **Before you do something that brings on the pain.**  
For example, take it before you do your physiotherapy.
- **Before breathing and coughing exercises.**
- **Before you start to move or turn.**

Pain pills take 30 to 45 minutes to start working. Intravenous pain medicine takes about 10 minutes to work. Talk to your nurse, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about the best time to take your pain medicine.

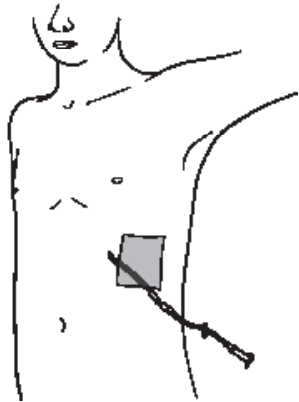
What it is called	How it works
<p data-bbox="131 1392 354 1430">Pills or tablets</p> 	<p data-bbox="659 1392 1203 1430">Pills or tablets swallowed by mouth.</p>
<p data-bbox="131 1617 386 1654">Intravenous (IV)</p> 	<p data-bbox="659 1617 1279 1787">Intravenous means inside the vein. Pain medicine can be given into the vein through a small needle or a plastic tube called a catheter.</p>

### What it is called

### How it works

Feeding tube

Pain medicine put through your feeding tube if you have one.



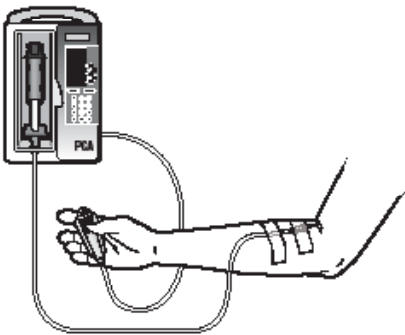
Needle injection (shots)

A needle shot into your muscle or under your skin.



Patient Controlled Analgesia (IV PCA)


This is an intravenous medicine that you give yourself by pressing a button.



Epidural

Pain and numbing medicine that goes through a thin tube into your back.



What it is called	How it works
<p data-bbox="131 237 323 275">Nerve block</p> 	<p data-bbox="659 237 1149 317">A needle injection that will numb the nerves.</p>

## **Are there ways to control my pain other than taking medicine?**

Along with taking medicine, here are some other things you can do:

- Apply heat or cold
- Deep breathing
- Distract yourself. You can try watching TV, listening to the radio or reading a book.

Ask your nurse or doctor if any of these methods would help control your pain.

**You and your family are an important part of the team that manages your pain.**

**For more information about pain management at UHN, please visit our website at:**

**[www.uhn.ca/About\\_UHN/programs/pain\\_management](http://www.uhn.ca/About_UHN/programs/pain_management)**