

# Pain Management

Most patients can get relief from pain with the proper treatment. Many patients are reluctant to ask for pain medication because they fear they will become addicted, however, studies have shown that less than 1% of patients who have no history of substance abuse and regularly take pain medications become addicted.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you are experience pain, especially if it's a new pain as they may need to evaluate the cause. Patients and families often don't report pain because they don't want to bother the doctor or nurse, or they do not want to appear to be complaining. Good pain management helps you better participate in your treatment and will improve your quality of life.

## **Preventing pain: The best method to treat pain is to prevent it from returning.**

- Be sure to take your pain medications as prescribed. The best way to take pain medications for chronic pain is on a schedule (e.g., every 4 hours) instead of "as needed". Waiting until the pain returns or increases means you will have to play "catch up". You may even need to take more medicine than if you treat the pain before it becomes a problem.
- Take supplemental, or as-needed pain medications before any activity you know will be painful. This will allow you to be active with less pain.

## **Managing the side effects of pain medication**

- Most patients taking pain medicines will develop constipation. Take a stool softener such as Docusate and a laxative such as Sennokot every day to prevent constipation. As the dose of the pain medication increases, so must the dose of the stool softener and laxative. Add fruits, including prunes, and juices to your diet to help prevent constipation.
- Most other side effects diminish very quickly. Sleepiness or mild confusion may occur during the first 24 to 48 hours after starting a new pain medication or after a significant dose increase. This usually lessens within 2 to 3 days.
- Nausea usually lessens within 3 to 4 days after starting a new pain medication. If nausea is severe or persists, contact your doctor or nurse.

## **Non-medication pain management**

- Heat, cold, vibration, and other treatments can provide relief for some patients.
- Relaxation and guided-imagery exercises can be very helpful in addition to your pain medications.
- Distraction can be a complement to your pain medicines. Music, movies, or a video game can help distract you from pain. These can be especially useful when you have periods of increased pain.
- Massage can help reduce muscle tension and relieve pain. There are books and videotapes that show massage techniques. You may want to your family and friends for back rubs or massage of painful muscles. They may appreciate being able to help you feel better.
- Support groups can provide the opportunity to talk with others in your situation and learn what has helped them. Talking to a therapist may also be helpful.

## **When to contact your doctor or nurse**

- If your pain is not well relieved with the pain medications you have. Many different pain medications are available and everyone responds differently to each medicine. You may need to try several different medications before finding the one most effective for you.
- If you are having side effects to the pain medications
- If you are having trouble getting your pain medications or if you cannot afford them.