

Pain Management: Understand Your Aches and Pains and Take Control

Controlling Your Pain

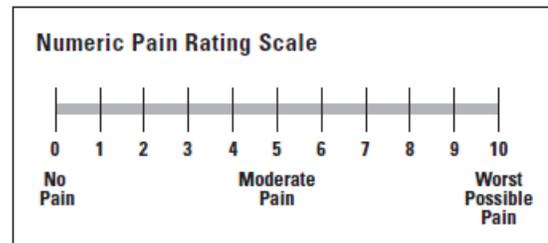
At some point in life, everyone has pain. Pain often occurs as a result of disease, injury, surgery or a medical procedure. It's important to know that most pain can be controlled, and that unrelieved pain can lead to problems such as loss of function, sleep problems and depression.

Pain includes many types of discomfort and can occur anywhere in your body. It may feel like a dull ache, or it can be severe and unbearable. Pain can include pulling, tightness, cramping, burning, stabbing or other unpleasant sensations.

Everyone has the right to have their pain assessed and treated, and your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will work with you to ensure your pain is prevented or relieved.

The Numeric Pain Rating Scale

When you feel pain, it's often difficult to describe it to your doctor or nurse. A pain rating scale can help you communicate exactly what you're feeling so they will understand.



The Numeric Pain Rating Scale* is a helpful tool you can use to describe how much pain you are feeling and to measure how well treatments are relieving your pain.

Become familiar with the pain rating scale. On a scale of 0 to 10, 0 means “no pain” and 10 means the “worst possible pain.” The middle of the scale describes “moderate pain.” A two or three rating would be “mild pain.” A rating of seven or higher is “severe pain.”

Practice using the scale. Do you have pain now? If not, think about pain you’ve had in the past. Look at the pain rating scale and answer these questions:

- On a scale of 0 to 10, what is the usual amount of this pain?
- On a scale of 0 to 10, what is the pain at its worst?

(Your answer to the second question may be higher than your answer to the first).

Your doctor or nurse will ask you to rate your pain/discomfort on a regular basis. You may be asked to rate your pain once a day or as often as every hour. If you have questions on how to use this scale, be sure to ask a health care professional for help.

Keep Your Pain in Check

Tell your doctor or nurse.

Your doctor or nurse may not know you have pain unless you alert them. Plan with them how you will communicate about the pain and its treatment. It is very important to talk with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist honestly and openly about your pain so you can receive the proper treatment.

Write it down.

Think about what may have caused your pain or made it worse, such as bending to pick up a newspaper or getting in or out of a car.

Rate your pain.

Do this before and after you take your pain medication. Rating your pain can help your doctor know whether or not your medication is working.

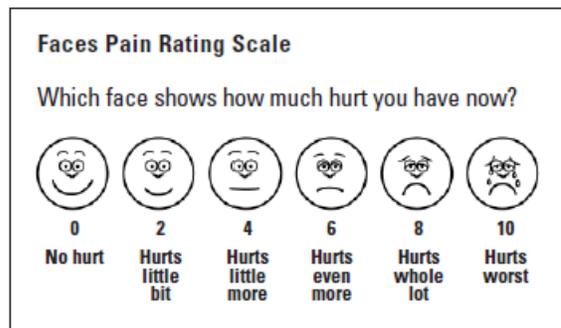
For example:

Mr. Jones rates his pain as a six. He takes his pain medication, and one hour later he rates his pain as a two. His pain medication worked because his rating fell from six, which is moderate pain, to two, which is mild pain.

The Faces Pain Rating Scale

It may be easier — especially for children — to use the Faces Pain Rating Scale** instead of the numeric scale.

Each face on this scale shows a different amount of pain. The face on the left is smiling because it feels no pain or hurt.



The face farthest to the right is crying because it feels the worst hurt or pain, even though you don't have to be crying to rate your pain the worst.

You can tell your doctor or nurse about your pain by pointing to the face that shows how much you hurt.

Pain Control

Why You Need Pain Relief

Many people think they should “tough it out” with pain, but research has shown that unrelieved pain can be harmful. Pain can make it hard to do things like getting out of bed or walking. Pain can also stop you from getting a good night's sleep or from going to work.

Setting Goals for Pain Control

In order to perform your day-to-day activities, set a goal for pain control. This goal would be a rating that allows you to continue your important activities easily. To help set your goal, answer the following questions:

- What activities do I need to do?

For example, if you have surgery, you will probably need to cough and breathe deeply after the operation to prevent complications.

Or, if you have chronic pain, you may need enough pain relief to be able to drive, work or shop.

- What rating will make it easier for me to do these activities?

Everyone is different. Many people need a pain rating of three or less to be able to function without problems. Studies show that ratings of four or higher make it difficult for patients to carry out daily activities.

Disclaimer: This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Talk with your doctor if you have Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options.

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* The Pain Rating Scale is adapted from McCaffery M, Pasero C. Pain: Clinical Manual, 2nd ed., 1999: p. 67, Mosby, Inc. There is a 2011 version of this manual...

** The Faces Pain Rating Scale modified from Wong, D.L. Whaley & Wong's Essentials of Pediatric Nursing, 5th ed., 1997: pp.1215-1216, Mosby, Inc.