

Pain can be managed better if you report the pain when it is just beginning.

Talk with your health care team and develop a plan to use other ways to lessen your pain.

MedStar Washington Hospital Center

MedStar Washington Hospital Center is a 926-bed major teaching hospital and a proud member of the MedStar Health System. It is the largest private not-for-profit hospital in the nation's capital, among the largest hospitals in the mid-Atlantic region and a major referral center for the most complex tertiary services. It consistently ranks among the nation's top hospitals as recognized in *U.S. News & World Report*. The Hospital Center is a national leader in the research, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular and kidney disease, stroke, cancer, endocrine disorders, ear, nose and throat and geriatric and respiratory care. The hospital operates an NIH Stroke Center and is the first stroke center in the District of Columbia to be certified by The Joint Commission. The Hospital Center operates MedSTAR, one of the country's top shock-trauma and medevac programs, and the region's only adult burn center.

Our Mission

MedStar Washington Hospital Center, a valued member of MedStar Health, is dedicated to delivering exceptional patient first health care. We provide the region with the highest quality and latest medical advances through excellence in patient care, education and research.



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**Working Together to
Manage Your Pain**

Knowledge and Compassion
Focused on You

This booklet provides information on how to prevent and manage any pain you may have.

Introduction

Health care teams at MedStar Washington Hospital Center are committed to giving excellent care. Preventing and treating your pain or discomfort is an important part of your care.

What is pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that comes from injury, disease or damage to your body. Pain is your body's way of sending a warning to your brain. When your body gets hurt, signals are sent along nerves into your spinal cord and up to your brain. Pain medicine blocks these signals to your brain so the pain can be relieved or decreased.

Sometimes pain is a nuisance, it may be a signal that something is wrong. Pain that is not treated may cause you to feel anxious, depressed, tired or moody.

As a patient at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, you have the right to:

- Receive information about medicines and other ways to manage pain
- Regular assessment for the presence of pain
- Safe and timely treatments to relieve pain
- Ongoing evaluation of the pain treatment plan
- A health care team that responds quickly to reports of pain

As a patient at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, you have the responsibility to:

- Talk with your health care team about pain relief options
- Tell your health care team when you are having pain
- Assist your health care team in assessing your pain
- Participate in a pain prevention/management plan
- Participate in the ongoing evaluation of your pain

Managing your pain

Pain can often be controlled with good assessment, planning and patient/family input. Become a partner with your health care team, by discussing:

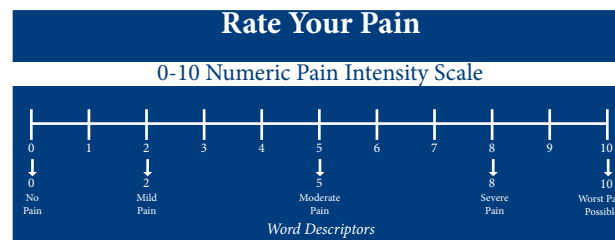
- What to expect about how your pain can be managed
- Making a pain management plan that is right for you
- Your past experiences and response to pain
- Allergies you have to any medicines or foods
- All medicines you are taking (over-the-counter, herbal and prescriptions)
- Your concerns about the side effects of the medication or becoming "addicted" to pain medication
- Your concern that the need for medication means that your condition may be worsening

Questions you may want to ask:

- How much pain is common with this type of surgery or procedure, and where will it occur?
- What medicines will be used to treat pain?
- How often may I have medicine?
- Is there anything else besides medicine that may help me feel better?

Measuring your pain

Pain is personal. Your input is the key to getting the best pain relief. You will be asked to rate your pain using the following scale:



Reporting your pain as a number helps the health care team know how well your treatment is working and whether to make any changes in your plan of care. Please tell the person caring for you as soon as pain begins or if pain does not go away after

treatment. He or she will take action to help you feel better, and will check to make sure the medication is working.

Medicines to relieve pain

Medicines can be given as pills, patches or into a vein. There are many different types of pain medicines, and they work in different ways. If you have pain, your health care team will work with you to find the pain medicine that will best help you.

Benefits and risks to all medicines

Your health care team will talk with you about the risks and benefits of any pain medicine you may choose to take, but ask questions if you have concerns. Sometimes it is best to combine medicine, or to change the dose or method of giving the medicine to relieve pain.

Other pain relief methods

Pain can also be treated with:

- Cold packs I warm packs
- Relaxation techniques: listening to music, slow deep breathing and use of visual imagery
- Patient/family aching about your health problem and treatment plan
- Help from family and friends
- Special spiritual, religious or cultural practices

Treating you pain at home

Participate in planning how to manage your pain at home.

- Before going home, check with your health care team about:
 - Your pain treatment plan for home
 - Any limits you may have while taking certain medicines or treatments
 - How to take your medicines (for example, with food or on an empty stomach)
 - When to report any changes or problems with your plan
 - Who to call if you cannot deal with your pain at home
- Carefully follow your health care team's directions on how to treat your pain