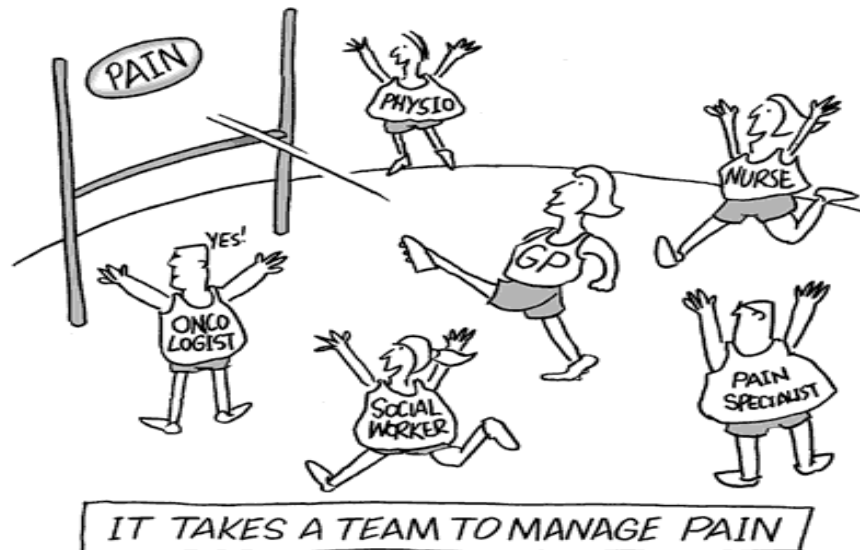


August is Palliative Care and Cancer Pain Awareness Month



What is palliative care?

Palliative care, also called supportive care, focuses on improving the quality of life for people living with chronic illnesses such as cancer. Palliative care can be offered at any stage of treatment and is not the same as hospice. Palliative care includes the control of pain, symptom management, and support of emotional, social and spiritual well-being.

The focus of care is on the patient and family. The palliative care team members may include a doctor, chaplain, social worker, nurse, physical therapist, dietitian, pharmacist, and breathing (respiratory) therapist. The team works together with your primary care providers to develop treatment plans, manage pain and other symptoms and give emotional support.

An important part of palliative care is pain control. Cancer-related pain is a concern for cancer patients. More than half of all cancer patients have significant pain.

What is cancer pain?

Cancer pain can be caused by cancer itself or its treatment and can be controlled or lessened in most patients. Not everyone with cancer has pain. For those with pain, there are various ways to manage it.

Pain may improve with treatment, healing and time. If pain persists, it's important to realize that most of the time it can be relieved. Only you know how much pain you have. Pain is easier to treat when it first starts. It may get worse if you wait too long to treat it. Tell your healthcare team as soon as you start to experience pain.

When cancer pain is **not** treated properly, you may also feel:

- Tired
- Depressed
- Angry
- Worried
- Lonely
- Stressed

When cancer pain **is** treated properly, you may:

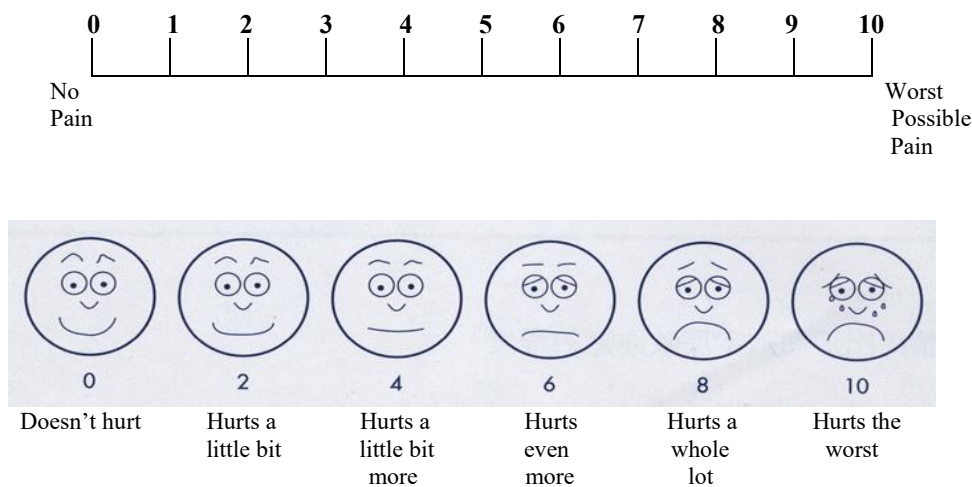
- Enjoy being active
- Sleep better
- Enjoy family and friends
- Improve your appetite
- Enjoy sexual intimacy

How is cancer pain treated?

To treat pain it must be measured. Pain levels are measured after starting cancer treatment, when pain is reported, and after starting any type of treatment for pain. To help your healthcare team treat your pain, communication is important. Your healthcare team will ask you questions that will help decide how to manage your pain. Two examples of pain scales are below:

- **Pain Score:** You will be asked to describe your pain level using a pain score.

"On a scale of zero to ten, where zero means no pain, and ten equals the worst possible pain, what is your current pain level?"



If you have pain, your healthcare team may ask you to:

- Show exactly where the pain is on your body or on a drawing of a body and where the pain goes if it moves.
- Rate the highest amount of pain using the pain score.
- Tell what level of pain is acceptable to you.
- Describe the quality of pain. Does it prick, burn, throb, pull, or ache? Is it sharp?
- Describe when the pain occurs and how long it lasts.
- Explain what makes the pain better or worse.
- Explain what has worked to help relieve pain, such as heat, ice, massage, or relaxation.
- Describe how the pain has changed your normal daily activities.

After you describe your pain, your healthcare team may need more information about what is causing it. You may be examined or asked to have an X-ray or a scan of the areas where you hurt. Since pain can be caused by many things, it is important for the healthcare team to find out the reason for your pain and plan how to make you more comfortable.

What is used to treat cancer pain?

Medicines are one of the most common ways to control your pain. Most pain from cancer can be simply treated using medicines taken by mouth. The doses of these medicines often need to be changed to make you feel better. Pain medicines can be divided into three groups: mild, moderate, and severe. Medicines can be over the counter or prescribed by your healthcare provider.

What are some other ways to control cancer pain?

In addition to pain medicines, the following may be suggested:

- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Nerve block
- Alternative therapies, such as reiki, acupuncture, meditation, yoga

Supportive care trials

Supportive care trials examine and address the long- and short-term physical, emotional, spiritual, practical, social and financial effects of cancer and its treatment among survivors of cancer. If you would like information about nationwide clinical trials for supportive care, you can call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCER or visit their Web site at www.cancer.gov.

Where can I find further information?

The Resource and Learning Center

www.cinj.org/rlc

Provides reliable, relevant and current information about all aspects of cancer.



RLC website QR code.
Scan with smartphone / device.

The American Cancer Society

1-800-ACS-2345

www.cancer.org

Cancer Care, Inc., National Office

1-800-813-HOPE (1-800-813-4673)

www.cancercare.org

Cancer Nation

1-877-NCCS-YES (1-877-622-7937)

www.canceradvocacy.org

Cancer Survivors Network

csn.cancer.org/

National Cancer Institute

1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

www.cancer.gov

NCI Office of Cancer Survivorship
<https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/ocs>

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
800-232-4636
www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/index.htm

National Institute of Health
301-496-4000
www.nih.gov