

# Pain Management in the Home

**Pain is a signal to the brain that something may be wrong and can be a problem for many people with life-limiting illnesses. Tell your hospice team if the patient experiences any degree of troublesome pain.**

### WHAT CAN I DO?

- Pain can impact physical, emotional and spiritual well being. Treating pain early and consistently can prevent the patient from suffering.
- Listen and believe the patient's report of pain. Not everyone experiences pain in the same way.
- Keep a record of the pain to share with the Hospice Team.
  - Where is the pain?
  - Does the pain keep the individual from doing their usual activities?
  - Use a tool to describe how bad the pain is "no pain" or "0" to "worst possible pain" or "10".
  - Try to find how the individual describes the pain – "aching", "burning", "gnawing", "stabbing", "sharp", "dull", "continuous" or "sudden".
  - Is the pain mild, moderate or severe?
  - What makes the pain better or worse?
  - How often does the pain occur?

- Give the patient medication as instructed by the hospice team.
  - Different types of pain are treated with different medications.
  - Medications could include anti-inflammatories (like ibuprofen), steroids, anti-anxiety medications and opioids.
- Keep a written list of what medications were given, how much was given and what time it was given. Also record the patient's pain level after the medication is given.



### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- The patient experiencing pain is the only one who knows how it feels.
- The patient experiencing pain is the only one who knows how well the main medication is working.
- The patient may not be able to express that they have pain. Non verbal signs are: anxiety, restlessness, agitation, moaning, grimacing, muscle tension, furrowed brow, trouble breathing, guarding (protecting) a part of their body or pushing people away.
- Pain is not always curable but there are effective ways to treat it.
- Non medication ways to help pain are: applying heat or cold, repositioning, distraction, relaxation, meditation, prayer and music.
- Pain medication side effects could be constipation, changes in breathing, increased sleepiness or drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting or itching.

### CALL THE HOSPICE TEAM IF:

- Pain is not any better with the current medications or treatments.
- Pain is increasing or getting more frequent.
- Frequent or increased nonverbal signs of pain.
- New sudden pain.
- If you feel the patient is having a new or worsening side effect of the pain medication.
- If the patient is unable to take the medications.
- There are any changes, so we can plan interventions for optimal care.

Need Support?

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