



# Managing Pain

It is important to treat pain as soon as possible because pain may be harder to manage if it becomes severe. We will work with you and your family to make your child as comfortable as possible. This document will tell you more about what to expect and how to develop the best plan to manage any pain your child may have.

## What are the signs and symptoms of pain?

Each child may react to pain differently. Some ways children may react to pain include:

- Crying
- Making faces
- Moving their body differently than normal
- Low energy
- Having trouble sleeping
- Not wanting to eat
- Children may also describe their pain as achy, sharp, dull, burning, throbbing, pressure, or stabbing

**We will work with you and your family to make sure your child is as comfortable as possible. Please tell us right away if you think your child is in pain.**

## How does pain affect the body, and how long does it last?

Pain is how your body tells you that something is wrong. But pain can make it harder to eat, rest, play, and sleep. Pain can also make the body recover from illnesses or injuries more slowly. Managing pain is important for both healing and comfort.

There are **3 main types of pain**:

- **Acute pain:** This kind of pain doesn't last very long and goes away completely.
- **Episodic pain:** This kind of pain comes on quickly, stays for some time, goes away, but comes back from time to time.
- **Chronic pain:** This kind of pain can be ongoing.

The type of pain that a person has depends on the cause. Your child's doctor will talk with you about how long your child's pain may last.

## How will the doctors and nurses know how much pain my child is having?

Your child's care team will often ask your child where they are feeling pain on their body and how much it hurts. They use a pain scale to measure the amount of pain your child has. This pain scale helps the care team decide which treatment to use to take care of your child's pain.

We use several different pain scales at our hospital. One pain scale we use often is below. Your care team will work with you to decide which pain scale is best for your child.



## How do we treat pain?

Many things can help with the pain. Your child's care team may use more than one thing to treat their pain. Your child's care team will work with you to find the best combination. One way we treat pain is by giving medicine. Pain medicine can be given by mouth, through your child's IV, by a cream, or by a patch.

Depending on how the medicine is given, it can take up to an hour to fully work. Other possible treatments that can be used with the medicine are:

- Ice
- Heat
- Distraction
- Massage
- Relaxation
- Music
- Changing positions
- Swaddling
- Breastfeeding

It may not be possible to get rid of all pain, but your child's care team will try to bring the pain as low as possible. Your child's care team will always check to see how your child feels after getting the pain medicine.

## What can parents do to help their children manage pain?



You are an important member of your child's care team, and you know your child best. We can work with you to learn different ways to help manage your child's pain depending on your child's needs and likes. Some of these ways might include:

- Bringing music and a favorite toy or blanket to comfort your child.
- Talking in a slow, quiet, soothing voice to your child.
- Stroking or massaging your child's face, arms, feet, or other parts of their body.
- Rocking or holding your child.
- If your child is an infant, give your child something to suck on, such as a pacifier.
- Distracting your child with play, games, TV, or movies.
- Helping your child find a more comfortable position.

## Helpful Resources

**Child Life Specialists:** They are people who can help your child prepare for painful procedures and cope with pain through play, activities, and distraction.

**The Pain Management Service:** They can provide many different kinds of treatments for pain. Talk with your doctor about your child needs and the Pain Management Service.

**The Family Resource Center:** It has many helpful resources on pain, including books, relaxation tapes, music, and movies that you can check out.

**Palliative Care team:** They can support your family by helping you make informed decisions about your child's care and helping you find other helpful resources for your specific needs.

Ask your care team how you can get in contact with any of these resources.

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