

If you have cancer, you may worry about pain. Your doctor and nurse will help you control pain.

There are reasons why people with cancer have pain, such as when the cancer presses on bones, nerves, or organs inside your body. Sometimes, cancer treatments can be painful. You may also have pain from other medical problems that have nothing to do with your cancer or cancer treatment (such as pain from arthritis).

### How will my doctor treat pain?

Your doctor will treat most types of cancer pain with medicine. Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or surgery may also help to reduce your pain.

Below is a table of the types of medicine used to treat different types of pain.

| Types of Pain  | Medicine  |
|--|---|
| Mild<br>Mild-to-moderate pain                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®)</li><li>• Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine (such as Naprosyn®)</li></ul> |
| Moderate-to-severe pain<br>Severe pain               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opiates (such as morphine, fentanyl, Tylenol No. 3®, and Dilaudid®)</li></ul>                                     |
| Tingling and burning pain<br>Pain caused by swelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-depressant and other medications (such as Elavil® and steroids)</li></ul>                                    |

#### **You should know that:**

- You will **not** become hooked (or addicted) to pain medicine, when taken as your doctor prescribes.
- You should never keep quiet about your cancer pain – tell your health care team.
- You should never think that nothing can be done to your reduce pain.
- Your doctor can control or reduce most types of pain by using one medicine or a mixture of pain medicines.

### Looking for more information on this topic?

You can contact the Canadian Cancer Society at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) or call the Cancer Information Service of the Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333. You can also contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information. For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to <http://publiclibraries.ns.ca>.

Cancer Care Nova Scotia has made an electronic patient education program, the Oncology Interactive Education Series (OIES), available in most health districts in Nova Scotia. Please check with your health care team, your Cancer Patient Navigator, or your health care library to see if this program is available in your district and to learn how to use the program.

For more information visit *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* website [www.cancercare.ns.ca](http://www.cancercare.ns.ca)



Capital Health

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## How can I deal with pain?

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- Tell your doctor or nurse right away about any pain that you feel. Don't wait for your doctor or nurse to ask you about pain.
- If your doctor prescribes pain medicine for you, take it as directed. You should also keep track of what kind of pain medicine you are taking.
- Keep a record of your pain. Try to think about your pain by writing down the answers to these questions:
  - What type of pain is it (tingling or burning pain, throbbing pain, sharp pain)?
  - When did the pain start?
  - Where is the pain?
  - How bad is the pain (mild, moderate or severe)?
  - What makes the pain worse or better?
  - Does the pain move to other places in my body (such as into my legs)?
- Try to do deep breathing or find other ways to relax. Having tense muscles or feeling tense and worried may make you feel more pain.
- Take as much pain medicine as your doctor prescribes. Taking the pain medicine will not affect the way your treatment works or make your cancer worse.

## What are the side effects of pain medication?

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Some people do not have any side effects. Other people may have a few or many side effects. Your health care team will give you more details about the side effects that you might have, and how to cope with them.

## Questions to ask your health care team

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- Is the pain I am feeling caused by my cancer or my cancer treatment?
- What medicines will help reduce my pain?
- What other pain treatments might help?
- How quickly can I expect to get relief from my pain?
- What should I do if the pain medicines don't help me?
- If I get side effects from the pain medicine, how can I get rid of them?
- Are there certain kinds of pain that I should tell you about right away? When is it okay to wait until my next appointment?