



PATIENT/FAMILY TEACHING SHEET

MANAGING PAIN

What is Pain?

- Hurting or discomfort
- A condition that can cause physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial suffering
- An experience that can only be felt and described by the person with the pain

What to Report to the Hospice/Palliative Care Team?

- How severe or intense the pain is as a number -- using 0 as no pain and 10 as the worst possible pain imaginable (other ways of reporting pain are also available such as faces, thermometer scale – ask your nurse to tell you more about these options)
- Where the pain is
- If the pain keeps the patient from doing his/her usual activities
- What makes the pain worse
- What makes the pain better
- How well the pain medication is working
- Any side effects of the medication (common side effects include: constipation, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, dizziness, itching)
- Sleepiness
- Words that describe the pain such as aching, burning, gnawing, grabbing
- The effect of the pain on the patient and family (for example, is the family anxious or unsure about how to give the medicines; is the patient becoming irritable from lack of sleep because of the pain)

What can be done?

The good news is that there is much you, your caregiver and the hospice/palliative care team can do for managing pain. The team will try to find the reason for the pain and discuss treatments with you. Medications are usually necessary to relieve pain – the nurse will give you information about the medicines, when to take them, and what to know about them.

- It is important to take or administer the medicines as ordered.
- Report any medication side effects such as nausea or itching to the hospice nurse. Often such side effects can be treated and may stop after taking the medication for a few days.
- Other things that might make the pain better are:
 - Relaxing activities
 - Distracting activities such as watching TV, listening to music or playing a game
 - Heat (such as a heating pad or warm compress) or cold (such as an ice pack)
 - Smells of certain plants (called aroma therapy)
 - Light massage
 - Distraction or thinking of other things
 - Guided imagery (that is, picturing relaxing scenes to take one's mind off the pain)
 - Soaking in a tub of warm water

Ask your hospice team to teach you how to use these ways of relieving the pain.