



How to manage cancer pain



If you have cancer pain, it could mean you're hurting in a certain part of your body. Or it could mean you just can't get comfortable and feel unwell overall. It's important to talk with your doctor about any pain you have so they can create a plan to manage it. Pain can be controlled (lessened) in most people with cancer.



What causes pain in people with cancer?

The cancer itself often causes pain, such as if the cancer grows into or presses on nerves, bones, or organs. The level of pain you have depends on different things, such as the type of cancer, stage of cancer, other health problems you have, and your pain tolerance.

Cancer surgery, treatments, or tests can also cause pain.

Tell your doctor if you:

- Take any medicines to treat other health problems
- Take more or less of the pain medicine than prescribed
- Are allergic to any medicines
- Use any over-the-counter medicines, home or herbal remedies, or alternative therapies such as acupuncture



How can I manage cancer pain?

Talk with your doctor about your pain to help them know how to treat it.

Tell them:

- How much pain you're feeling. Use a pain level from 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain).
- Where you have pain
- When it started
- How long it lasts
- What makes it worse
- How it affects your life

Your doctor will assess your pain and share ways to lessen it, such as to:

- Take prescription pain medicines – take them exactly as your doctor prescribes
- Try warm baths or warm washcloths on painful areas – if this doesn't help, try ice wrapped in a towel or cool packs
- Try a relaxation method, such as deep breathing
- Do activities you enjoy to distract yourself



Why is it important to manage pain?

When cancer pain is not managed, you may feel:

- Tired
- Depressed
- Angry
- Worried or stressed
- Lonely

When cancer pain is managed, you can:

- Enjoy being active and spending time with family and friends
- Sleep better
- Feel like eating
- Enjoy sexual intimacy
- Be in a better mood



When should I call my doctor for pain?

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- New, sudden pain when doing everyday actions, like coughing, sneezing, moving, walking, or standing
- Pain that gets worse
- A new skin rash
- Changes in your ability to pee or poop
- Trouble breathing



Learn more about cancer pain at:

[cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/pain.html](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/pain.html)

To schedule a visit at Robert E. Hardy Cancer Center, call 615-341-4383