

UNDERSTANDING PAIN

We are committed to working with you and your child to make your child as comfortable as possible. It is important to treat pain as soon as possible because pain may be more difficult to manage if it becomes severe. Treatment often involves doing more than one thing to relieve the pain. We will work with you to help you know what to expect and to develop the best plan to prevent and manage any pain your child may have.

What is pain?

Pain is a useful message that lets people know that something in their body is wrong and needs attention. Most pain is temporary, fading away as the problem is healed. Pain can make it difficult to eat, rest, play and sleep. It has real physical and psychological effects that can slow down recovery. Keeping the pain as low as possible is important for healing and comfort.

What are signs and symptoms of pain?

All children are different in how they respond to pain. Your child may not show any signs or may act differently when he or she is in pain. He or she may cry, make faces, or move his or her body in a certain way. Your child might also be very quiet and still because he or she is afraid of moving or has less energy. Infants and nonverbal children are sometimes fussy, have difficulty sleeping, or are not hungry when they have pain. Children who talk can describe their pain in many ways, such as achy, sharp, dull, burning, throbbing, pressure or stabbing.

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

Your child’s nurses and doctors will ask your child often where and how much it hurts. They use a “pain scale” to measure the amount of pain you child has.

You can also use these methods to measure your child’s pain and help your child report his/her pain to the medical team.

Developmental age: < 1 year	Developmental Age: 1 - 3 years	Developmental Age: 3 - 7 years	Developmental Age: > 7 years
Your baby’s pain based on his/her movements, behavior, and vital signs.	We will measure your child’s pain based on his/her movements, behavior, and vital signs.	We will ask him/her to point to a picture of a face to tell how much pain he/she has.	If your child can understand numbers, we will ask him/her to rate his/her pain on a scale of 0 to 10, (0 means no pain and 10 means the worst pain possible).

Keeping track of your child’s pain using a pain scale helps the healthcare team decide which treatment will be best to take care of your child’s pain.

How is pain treated?

There are many things that can help with the treatment of pain. Your healthcare team will work with you and your child to find the combination that is best. Possible treatments include:

- Medications
- Distraction
- Massage
- Relaxation training
- Music
- Positioning
- Swaddling
- Breastfeeding

It may not be possible to get rid of all pain but your child's team will use one or more treatments to bring the pain as low as possible.

How will we work together?

Tell us when and where your child has pain. We will treat the pain and then check with you and your child about how well it worked. Here are more ideas to help you work with us to make your child comfortable.

- Talk with your child's doctors and nurses and ask them questions. Some things you could ask are:

- o How much pain should my child expect and for how long?
- o What kind of treatment will you give my child to relieve pain?
- o Is there anything you can do to make a procedure less painful?

- Ask nurse or doctor for pain relief when pain first begins
- Learn about how your child's doctors and nurses measure pain.
- Tell your healthcare team about your child's previous experience with pain and what helped the most.
- If your child has special needs or cannot communicate for themselves, providers will ask you for additional information.

What can parents do to help their child manage pain?

You are an important person to help, as we take care of your child's pain. We encourage you to try several things to find out what works best for you and your child.

- Bring music and other favorite toy or blanket, to comfort your child.
- Talk in a soothing voice to your child. (slow and quieter voice is usually calming)
- Stroke or massage your child's face, arms, feet, or other parts of his or her body.
- Rock, hold or carry your child.
- If your child is an infant, give your child something to suck on, such as a pacifier.
- Distract your child with play, games, TV or movie.
- Help your child find a more comfortable position.

Additional Resources to Help

- Child Life Specialists are people who can help your child prepare for painful procedures and cope with pain by providing medical play, activities, and distraction. Call (650) 497-8336.
- The Pain Management Service can provide many different kinds of treatment for pain. Talk to your doctor about your child's needs and the Pain Management Service.
- The Family Resource Center is on the third floor of the hospital and has many helpful resources on pain, including books, relaxation tapes, music, and movies that you can check out. Call (650) 497-8102.