



Things you can do on your own

Talk about your pain with your care team.

- Talking with your care team about your pain will help find ways to improve control of it.
- Write down information about your pain so you can share it with your care team. Keep track of:
 - Where it is located
 - What it feels like (sharp, dull, throbbing, aching, burning, shooting, etc.)
 - How bad it is on a scale of 1 to 10
 - When it happens and how long it lasts
 - What makes it better or worse
 - What activities it interferes with (walking, eating, sleeping, etc.)
 - What medications help it, and how well they work
 - Write down your pain level on a scale of 1 to 10 before taking a medication. Take the medication and wait an hour. Write down your pain level on a scale of 1 to 10 again. Share this information with your care team.

Ask your care team if physical therapy might help.

- Sometimes people are afraid to move because of their pain. This fear and inactivity can make pain worse. A physical therapist may help you find safe ways to move and can help find the right exercise plan for you.

Consider complementary and integrative therapies.

- [Complementary and integrative therapies](#) are used alongside your medical treatments. They may help to lessen the side effects of cancer or treatment. Some examples include acupuncture, tai chi, yoga, or meditation.

Other remedies may help, too.

- Try putting hot or cold packs on the area where the pain is present.
- Do things to take your mind off pain, like watching TV (avoid stressful shows/movies), reading, listening to music, or engaging in a hobby or activity you enjoy. You may need to modify the hobby to fit your current abilities.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications.

- OTC pain medications may help with **mild to moderate pain**. You can buy these medications at your local drugstore. Examples include acetaminophen (Tylenol) and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and aspirin.
- Take them as directed on the package, unless you have been told they are not safe for you or if your care team tells you to take them differently.
- If you have ulcers, or kidney or bleeding problems, your care team may ask you to limit ibuprofen.
- If you have liver problems, your care team may ask you to limit acetaminophen.
- These medications do *not* make you sleepy and do *not* cause constipation.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you need opioid pain medications.

- **Opioids** can be very helpful for **moderate to severe pain**.
- They can cause drowsiness; you should avoid driving or activities that require you to be alert while taking them.
- They can also cause constipation; most people need to take laxatives or stool softeners along with opiates.
- Opiates that provide relief within 30 minutes and last for a few hours are called short-acting opiates.
- Long-acting opiates can control pain for 8-12 hours but may not help acute pain.
- Opiates are highly effective for treating pain; however, if they are used improperly, they can be addictive. Talk to your care team about how to use opiates safely.
- Always write down the doses of opiates you take and your levels of pain. Bring this information to your appointments.



When to call your care team for help

- If your pain gets worse
- If the pain is new or sudden
- If you are not sure how to take your medications



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/pain or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.