

You could also consider the use of hot or cold packs, acupuncture or acupressure, physiotherapy or laser therapy. Think about how you are holding your body or how you are positioned in bed, and use pillows to relieve any tension around your back or neck or painful body parts.

The Palliative Care volunteer service may offer hand and foot massages, haircuts, meditation groups, social outings, music or art therapy and even outings to local venues just to socialise. A volunteer could also share a game of cards with you or read a book to you.

What are some of the questions I should be asking my team?

Is it likely that I will experience pain? What is likely to cause my pain? How intense is the pain likely to get?

How effective will the medication be? What are the likely side effects? Are there other medications if this one doesn't work for me?

Can I adjust the dose myself? What complementary techniques or treatments could I use?

You can find more information in the Palliative Care Australia brochure *Asking Questions Can Help*.

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Want more information?


It's always best to talk to your doctor and care team for any information, but if you want to find out more about Palliative Care or pain management please see the links below.

Palliative Care Australia Inc

The *Asking Questions Can Help* booklet is available for download from the Palliative Care Australia website.

Information about morphine and other opioids is also available on the Palliative Care Australia website – simply click on the 'I am a patient' button.

www.palliativecare.org.au



Learn more
about pain
management

Pain

Discomfort. Distress. Anxiety. We have all experienced pain that exhausts us and wears us down.

It's perfectly normal to be worried about how your pain will be eased. Your loved ones will also be worried on your behalf.

Persistent intense pain can eat away at us. You can expect the specialist Palliative Care team to take your pain very seriously – after all, it is what they are experts in.

The good news is that most pain can be relieved.

Not everyone will experience pain, but if you do there are many medications available and different ways of administering them.

Other treatments and techniques will also help to relieve discomfort, like aromatherapy and massage.



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Communicate your pain with the team

To treat your pain the Palliative Care team need to know what pain you are experiencing.

Try to describe as clearly as possible the location and intensity of the pain. If the pain comes and goes keep a diary and record what you were doing that might have affected your pain.

Call the team if you experience changes in the nature, location or intensity of pain. Information about your experience of pain will be valuable clues for the team in how to best relieve your pain.

Pain medication

Medication is almost always used as a first step in treating pain in Palliative Care.

There are different types of medication and different ways of administering the medication such as tablet (oral), skin patches and injectable (usually into a large muscle).

The correct dose is a dose that stops the pain and gives you comfort.

You may be prescribed regular medication to be taken at regular intervals (e.g. every 4 or 8 hours). These doses ensure that a certain level of drug stays in your bloodstream at all times, so it is important that you take the medication at those intervals. Do not wait to experience pain before taking another dose.

If you find that you experience pain which 'breaks-through' these regular doses then you should contact your team. If the team has already arranged for a prescription of 'break-through' medication then you should take this and make a record of the time and dose.

Using pain medication is not a sign of weakness. Pain medication helps your body relax and this improves blood flow and body function.

Good control over your pain gives you a better sense of control over your life, and will help you relax and improve the quality of your life.

Common side-effects

Morphine and similar drugs cause constipation. This can be alleviated with laxatives. Dietary changes can also be of help.

Some people fear that they will become zombie-like on pain medication. There may be some sleepiness in the first few days but this effect is usually temporary. This is the result of your body adjusting to the new level of medication and may also occur if your dose levels are increased.

Some people think that drugs like morphine are addictive when used for pain relief. This is a myth. Morphine targets the pain receptors in your brain – you will not become addicted when it is properly prescribed.

What else can I do to relieve my pain?

Being in control affects the way you experience pain. The less control we have over our situation, the more likely we are to experience worse pain.

Other sources of stress in your life will also affect your experience of pain. Social isolation, boredom, anxiety, relationship issues and even lack of trust in your health professionals may each contribute to a more intensive experience of pain.

Make a list of all the things that help you relax. Keep these nearby and share them with your loved ones and team, and encourage them to encourage you to do appropriate activities when in pain.

These might include sitting in the sun, meditation, going for a gentle walk, using aromatherapy, having a coffee at your local café, wearing your favourite scarf, listening to music, calling a friend, patting a pet, singing to yourself or watching the footy.

