

# Managing Your Child's Pain



Most children need pain management in the hospital. Your child's healthcare provider will assess your child's pain and prescribe pain medicine as needed. You can help your child by being supportive and staying with them in the hospital. Most importantly, you can alert the healthcare team if you notice any signs of pain or discomfort in your child.

## How is your child's pain assessed?

Children express pain differently from adults. A special scale may be used to help your child describe pain. The scale may have facial expressions or numbers. Changes in physical and emotional behavior can also provide clues to pain level.



## What pain medicine will your child receive?

There are many different pain medicines. What kind your child receives depends on the cause of your child's pain and the results of the pain assessment. Your child's age, weight, and health history are also factors. You may be worried that your child will become dependent on these medicines. But they are given in controlled amounts over a set time. Your child's healthcare provider can answer any of your questions or concerns.

## How are pain medicines given?

- **Pills, tablets, or liquid.** These are taken by mouth. Some are swallowed and others dissolve in the mouth.
- **Suppository.** This is placed in the rectum where the medicine is absorbed into the body.
- **Transdermal patch.** This is placed on the skin to deliver pain medicine through the skin where it's absorbed into the body.
- **IV (intravenous) delivery.** An IV (small tube) is inserted into a vein in the body to deliver pain medicine.
- **PCA (patient-controlled analgesia) pump.** A PCA pump uses an IV to supply medicines. Your child can press a button and get more medicine when they need it. Safety features in the pump prevent your child from getting too much medicine.
- **Intramuscular injection.** Medicine is injected directly into a muscle where it's absorbed by the body.
- **Regional anesthesia.** This is a special kind of pain medicine that is delivered near the spine. These methods (epidural or spinal) block pain in one section of the body, often from the waist down.

## What are the side effects of pain medicine?

Your child may have some side effects. These usually go away when your child stops taking the medicine. Side effects can include:

- Constipation
- Sleepiness

- Holding urine (child can't pass urine out of the body)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Euphoria (child feels extreme happiness for a short time)
- Hallucination (child sees things that aren't there)
- Allergic reaction (child's body has a bad reaction to the pain medicines)

## How can you help manage your child's pain?

- Learn what you can about your child's health problem. Your child can pick up on your fears and worries. By staying positive and upbeat, you can help relieve some of your child's anxieties and discomfort.
- Alert healthcare providers if you notice any signs of pain in your child. You may be able to tell from your child's expressions if they are in pain. Your child may also become irritable, moody, cry more often, lose their appetite, or become withdrawn. Because you know your child better than anyone else, you are most likely to know if these behavioral changes suggest a problem.
- Be honest if a medical procedure will cause your child pain. Explain the procedure to your child and answer their questions truthfully. Reassure your child that you'll be with them or nearby during the procedures.
- If your child is in pain, you can help by touching and holding your child. Stroke your child's hair or hold their hand. Play games, watch videos, or read books with your child. Bring comfort items such as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal from home to the hospital. Relaxation techniques such as blowing bubbles, listening to music, and slow and deep breathing can also help.
- Ask your child's healthcare provider for more resources about managing your child's pain.

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