

# Getting the Pain Control You Need

## Cancer and Pain

Having cancer doesn't mean that you will have pain. Everyone is different, but if you do have cancer pain, you should know that you don't have to accept it.

**Cancer pain can almost always be relieved.**

When cancer pain is not treated properly, you may be tired, depressed, angry, worried, lonely and/or stressed.

When cancer pain is managed properly, you can: enjoy being active, sleep better, enjoy family and friends, have a better appetite, enjoy physical intimacy and prevent depression.

**Controlling pain is a key part of your overall cancer treatment. You're the only one who knows what your pain feels like.** Talking about your pain is important. It gives your health care team the feedback they need to help you feel better.

Some people with cancer don't want to talk about their pain. As a result, people sometimes get so used to living with their pain they forget what it's like to live without it.

But your health care team needs to know details about your pain and whether it's getting worse. This helps them understand how the cancer and its treatment are affecting your body. And it helps them figure out how to best control the pain.

## Some Reasons Patients May Not Want to Report Their Pain

- Fear that pain means their cancer is getting worse.
- Concern about distracting physicians from treating their cancer.
- Unsure about how basic pain management works.

- Concern about not being a “good” patient.
- Reluctance to take pain medications.
- Fear of addiction to pain medication or of being thought of as an addict.
- Worry about unmanageable side effects (such as constipation, nausea, or not thinking clearly).
- Concern about becoming tolerant to pain medications.
- Fear of not being able to afford the pain medications.

## Talking about your pain

The first step in getting your pain under control is talking honestly about it. Try to talk with your health care team and your loved ones about what you are feeling. This means telling them among other things:

- where you have pain
- what it feels like
- how strong your pain is
- how long it lasts, and
- what makes your pain better or worse.

**Your pain most likely can be relieved, but only if you talk with your health care team.**

## Resources

You can find in-depth information about talking with your health care provider at websites including these:

[www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/pain/paindiary/pain-control-toc](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/pain/paindiary/pain-control-toc)

[www.mayoclinic.com/health/cancer-pain/CA00021](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/cancer-pain/CA00021)

[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/paincontrol.pdf](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/paincontrol.pdf)

This fact sheet was developed by the Survivorship Workgroup of the New Mexico Cancer Council



<http://nmcancercouncil.org/index.htm>