



Pain

We all know that pain is hurting or discomfort. We think of pain as physical suffering, but it can also be emotional or spiritual suffering. In any case, it is an experience that can only be felt and described by the person with the pain.

Understanding your pain:

Pain should be reported to the Agrace team, by yourself, if you are able, or by your family/caregivers. Use these suggestions to communicate effectively:

- Report the severity or intensity of the pain as a number, using a scale from 0 as no pain to 10 as the worst possible pain imaginable. Other ways of reporting pain are also available, such as faces or descriptive words. Ask your nurse to tell you more about these options.
- Where is the pain?
- Is it new pain?
- Try to describe the pain. Here are some words you might use: shooting, dull, burning, constant, squeezing, aching, pressure, gnawing, stabbing or deep.
- Does the pain keep you from doing usual activities?
- What makes the pain worse?
- What makes the pain better?
- Has the pain changed either in location or intensity?
- How well is the pain medication working?
- Are there any side effects of pain medication, such as constipation, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, dizziness or itching?
- Is pain leading to prolonged or excessive sleepiness?
- What is the effect of the pain on you and your caregiver/family? (Are they anxious or unsure about how to give the medicines? Are you becoming irritable from lack of sleep because of the pain?)

What can help relieve and prevent pain?

There is much you, your caregivers and the Agrace team can do to manage your pain. The team will try to find the reason for the pain and discuss treatments with you.

- Medications are often necessary to relieve pain. Your Agrace nurse will give you information about the medicines, when they should be taken and what you should know about them. It is important for the medicines to be taken as ordered.
- Report any medication side effects to your nurse. Side effects can often be treated and may stop after you have taken the medication for a few days.
- In addition to medication, there are many other things that might help the pain; a few are listed here. Consider trying them, and ask your Agrace team if you want information about these or other ideas for pain relief:
 - › Relaxing activities
 - › Distracting activities, such as watching TV, humor, listening to music, playing with a pet or playing a game
 - › Breathing exercises
 - › Soaking in a tub
 - › Guided imagery (picturing relaxing scenes to distract the mind from the pain)
 - › Heating pads or warm compresses
 - › Cold, such as an ice pack
 - › Smells of certain essential plant oils (aromatherapy)
 - › Light massage
 - › Acupressure or acupuncture
 - › Reiki

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Helpful pain medication facts:

- For hospice patients, opioids (narcotic pain relievers) are the most commonly used medications for managing moderate to severe pain because of their effectiveness, ease of dosing and very minimal risk of severe side effects compared to their benefits.
- Many people have concerns and fears about taking morphine and other opioids. This is often because of misconceptions or a lack of information.
- Morphine and other similar medications are very safe when used correctly. Hospice patients are able to utilize these medications safely for many reasons.
 - › All Agrace staff receive extensive training in how these medications work in the body to relieve pain, how to give safe doses of the medication and which patients would benefit from taking these medications.
 - › After patients have been on medications like morphine for a while, their bodies adjust and higher doses may be needed to provide relief. This can be done safely without causing long-term side effects. Just as people often need changes in blood pressure medicine over time, people often need changes in their pain medication.
 - › Unlike other pain relievers, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), there is no limit to an opioid dose. Therefore, dosages can safely continue to increase throughout the progression of the disease.
 - › Addiction very rarely, if ever, occurs in patients who take medications for pain. Research has shown that less than 1 percent of all patients who take medications like morphine for pain develop any signs of addiction.
 - › Agrace staff, along with your physician, follow dosing standards suggested by the World Health Organization, the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research and the American and International Pain Societies. These dosing standards have been proven safe in numerous studies.
 - › It is important to keep track of how much extra or “breakthrough” pain medication you take. Ask your Agrace team about the best way to do this.

Medication (narcotic) side effects:

All medicines can have some side effects. Not all people get side effects from their medications, and some people have different side effects than others. Most can be easily managed.

Many side effects happen in the first few hours of treatment and gradually go away. Patients should not stop taking pain medicines. Call your Agrace nurse if you have side effects, because many things can be done to help prevent or treat them. Some of the most common side effects of pain medicines are described below:

- **Constipation** (not being able to have a bowel movement). See page 13 for tips to relieve constipation
- **Nausea and vomiting.** This may be associated with starting a new medication. It usually only lasts for the first day or two while the body adjusts to the medication. Often medications for nausea are utilized to help when adjusting medication dosages.
- **Sleepiness.** Some people who take pain medicines may feel drowsy or sleepy when they first take the medicine.

Notify your Agrace team anytime you have questions or concerns about pain, pain medication or alternative treatments for pain.