

## Understanding Pain

- Pain can be complex with terminal illness and have many factors:
  - Physical pain
    - From disease in the body
  - Spiritual pain
    - Related to questioning the meaning of life
  - Psychological pain
    - Related to anxiety of medical uncertainty
  - Social
    - Related to fear of losing independence
- The hospice team can help with all factors of pain.
  - **Physical:** the hospice nurse and hospice physician will work together to come up with a plan to make sure the pain is managed effectively.
  - **Spiritual:** the hospice spiritual counselor (also called chaplain) will help support exploring individual spirituality needs.
  - **Psychological:** the hospice social worker will help support quality of life during times of medical uncertainty.
  - **Social:** the whole hospice team will look at interventions that can help maintain as much independence as possible.

## Understanding Pain & Signs of Pain

- Pain is often related to disease, sometimes it is chronic (has lasted a long time) or acute (sudden pain that is new).
- If pain is chronic, it is best controlled with 24-hour dosing of medications so it does not get out of control.
  - When a 24-hour pain medication is used, there is usually another pain medication that is short acting and used for occasional pain flares.
- Signs of pain when someone cannot verbalize needs:
  - Grimacing, frowning, wrinkled forehead, tearing.
  - Resistance to care
  - Restlessness
  - Aggressive behavior or irritability
  - Stiffness with movement
  - Breathing hard with movement or rest

If symptoms are not managed or you have any questions, please contact your  
Confluence Health Home Care Services Hospice Team: (509) 433-3700

## Interventions to Reduce Pain & When to Contact Hospice

- **Interventions:**
  - Take your pain medication as prescribed
  - Reduce stress as much as possible
  - Use the full hospice team, including the social worker and spiritual counselor, to provide holistic support.
  - Light massage
  - Use hot or cold packs with guidance from your hospice nurse.
  - Try distraction, such as listening to favorite music.
  - Aromatherapy
  - Try different sitting and laying positions with pillows to offload pressure.
- **When to contact hospice:**
  - Pain is interfering with movement, sleep, preventing enjoyment of favorite activities, or spending time with others.
  - Pain is not controlled effectively
  - Pain is causing depression or anxiety
  - There are questions about pain medications

## Some Common Pain Medications & Side Effects

- **Common pain medications used by hospice:**
  - Morphine
  - Methadone
  - Oxycodone
  - Fentanyl
- **Constipation:**
  - The hospice nurses will make sure there is medication either taken on a regular basis or as needed to prevent constipation. When these medications are taken daily, there is a reduced risk of constipation.
- **Tiredness:**
  - Hospice nurses will instruct on small doses of pain medication to avoid increased tiredness.
  - If people become tired after trying pain medication, it can be due to the body finally being able to relax.
- **Nausea:**
  - Nausea can happen in the first few days after trying a new pain medication and tends to reduce after a few days of using the medication.
- **“Foggy” thinking:**
  - This tends to clear up after a short amount of time taking pain medication.

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## Other Information on Pain & Medications

- Pain medications are appropriate to help with pain or trouble breathing for people with a terminal illness.
- Myths:
  - *Opioids given by hospice cause death to come quicker.* Hospice starts with small doses of opioids.
  - *Opioids are addicting.* Addiction is a disease. Becoming addicted to opioids is rare when there is a terminal illness.
- Withholding pain medications at end of life when they are needed can cause unnecessary suffering, distress, and agitation.
- If pain is constant, pain medications are best given on a scheduled basis, even if someone is sleeping most of the time.
- Hospice does not always give opioids, sometimes Tylenol or ibuprofen are used before starting an opioid or are used with an opioid.

## Pain During the Final Hours to Days of Life

- Dying is not painful, disease is.
- If pain medication was needed before the final hours to days of life, these medications will need to be continued, even if someone is unresponsive.
- Sometimes medications for pain might need to be increased during the last hours to days as immobility and disease progression could be causing an increased pain level.
- The hospice team will provide guidance on non-medication strategies to help you confidently manage pain.
- Hospice will teach how to give pain medications, when to give pain medications, and how to tell if someone is in pain.

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