

Managing Pain at the End of Life

Will I have pain at the end of life?

Not everyone has pain at the end of life, but if you do, your doctor can help. He or she will ask about your pain. Questions might include where, how much, and how often it hurts.

If I can't talk, how will my doctor know I'm in pain?

You may show signs such as frowning, a fast heartbeat, quick breathing, and restlessness. These can tell your doctor about your level of pain.

What medicines will help?

You may have medicines such as over-the-counter painkillers, like acetaminophen (one brand: Tylenol), and prescription medicines, such as codeine and morphine. Other types of medicines may help with specific kinds of pain.

Are there any side effects from pain medicine?

You may feel queasy or throw up. You might be itchy, tired, or constipated. Talk to your doctor if you have any of these side effects.

Can I get addicted to pain medicine?

Addiction is rare when medicine is used correctly. Your doctor will carefully follow your use of pain medicine. Tell your doctor if you or anyone in your family has a history of alcohol or drug abuse.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

CancerCare: Managing Cancer Pain
http://media.cancer.org/publications/original/9-ccc_pain_control.pdf?1302555870

Cancer.Net
<http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/side-effects/pain-treating-pain-medication>

Get Palliative Care
<http://www.getpalliativecare.org/>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: A Guide to Safe Use of Pain Medicine
<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm095673.htm>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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