



MANAGING PAIN AFTER A CANCER DIAGNOSIS

STRATEGIES, TIPS AND RESOURCES

Created under the guidance of the Michigan Cancer Consortium



MANAGING YOUR PAIN AS A CANCER SURVIVOR

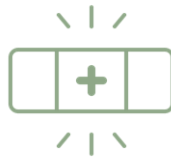
WHO IS A CANCER SURVIVOR?

According to the National Cancer Institute, a person from the time of diagnosis throughout the rest of their life.



AS A SURVIVOR

you may experience pain before, during, and after treatment for many reasons.



SHARED DECISION-MAKING

can be a helpful tool to manage pain during survivorship.



PAIN IS EXPERIENCED BY SURVIVORS IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that may come and go or cause constant discomfort. It can be described as aching, cramping, squeezing, numbness, tingling, throbbing, or stabbing.

Pain may be caused by the cancer itself or as a result of cancer treatment.

Pain can be affected by emotional or spiritual distress. These can be common feelings after a cancer diagnosis.

You may feel pain in one specific area, an area different from the location of your cancer, or many different parts of your body.



SHARED DECISION-MAKING IS IMPORTANT FOR SURVIVORS

Shared decision-making is a process where patients and their health care team work together to make decisions about medical care.

Health Care Team



information and recommendations



Patient



values and preferences



As a survivor, **you are the most important part of your health care team.** This document provides helpful tools and tips for talking with your health care team and creating a pain management plan that is right for you.



PAIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Different pain management strategies are included in this document that involve treatment with or without medication. It is important to understand that pain may change throughout survivorship. Your health care team will often complete a pain assessment to determine where the pain is coming from. This will help determine the pain management strategy that is most helpful.

Insurance coverage and cost may vary for treatments. Costs can also be different depending on the location where you live. Talk with your health care team and insurance provider about services and coverage in your area. Some cancer programs offer free or discounted services.



PAIN MANAGEMENT SERVICES

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	HOW IT HELPS
Counseling	There are many approaches to counseling. Ask your provider what is available in your area including art therapy, music therapy and mindfulness training.	Helps with feelings of anxiety or depression and learning new ways to cope. It can also assist with talking to your health care team and loved ones.
Occupational Therapy	Occupational therapists determine how pain affects a person's ability to complete their daily activities, retrain muscles to perform certain tasks, modify daily activities to save energy and help adapt the home to support this.	Eliminates or decreases pain by identifying activities that are valued and determines how to complete those activities with adaptive equipment.
Palliative Care	Palliative care is an interdisciplinary team approach to pain management by providing symptom relief for any stage of disease or illness to improve the quality of life for a patient and their families.	Treats physical, emotional, social and spiritual pain concerns.
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R)	PM&R physicians work with a multidisciplinary team including counselors, nurses, speech and language therapists and physical, occupational and recreational therapists.	Helps with pain due to changes in the body related to cancer and treatment.
Physical Therapy	Physical therapists complete an evaluation to determine the actual cause of your pain. They provide treatment and strategies including exercise and hands-on treatments to decrease muscle spasms, decrease lymphedema, improve strength, flexibility and nerve function.	Eliminates or decreases the pain and teaches how to manage pain successfully.
Speech and Language Therapy	Speech and language therapists most commonly work with head and neck cancers. They assist with speaking and swallowing.	Addresses pain associated with swallowing and limited range of motion in the jaw.



INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE INTERVENTIONS

These interventions may be used in addition to other pain management strategies to relieve pain.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	HOW IT HELPS
Acupuncture	Acupuncture is part of traditional Chinese medicine that assists the body in promoting healing and improving function. This is done by applying needles, pressure, heat and other treatments to different parts of the skin, called acupuncture points.	Works with the peripheral nervous system to address pain pathways and to promote the body's ability to heal.
Massage Therapy	Massage uses therapeutic touch to relax muscles and soft tissues through the combination of pressing, rolling, stretching or rubbing.	Can reduce stress, anxiety, fatigue and pain. It may also help with improved sleep.
Traditional Healers	Includes group ceremonies, individual ceremonies, holistic treatments, and prayers in different combinations and sometimes with western medicine to promote health and wellbeing.	It can include family and the community in the healing process with a focus on spiritual and emotional health and living in harmony with the earth.
Yoga and Yoga Therapy	Yoga combines stretching, breathing, and meditation that supports mind and body wellbeing.	It may help reduce pain, depression, anxiety, and fatigue.



It is important for your safety that you seek treatments from practitioners with advanced training in oncology.

OTHER STRATEGIES FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

These interventions may be used in addition to other pain management strategies to relieve pain.

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	HOW IT HELPS
Physical Activity	Can include cardiovascular activities (i.e. walking), strength, stretching and balance activities. It can be done at home or working with a physical therapist to determine the types of exercises that are right for you. Check with your health care team before starting physical activity.	Decreases sensitivity to pain by interrupting the transmission of pain signals.
Relaxation Techniques	Activities can include meditation, imagery, progressive relaxation and breathing exercises. These strategies can be done at home but you may benefit from learning the techniques from a service provider, for example a counselor or yoga instructor.	Reduces tension and relaxes the body. These techniques may assist in removing the focus on pain.
Support Groups	A support group provides an opportunity to meet with a group of people about a common experience, like pain. This group can meet in-person, online or through a teleconference.	Helps with feelings of isolation, anxiety and depression. Individuals are encouraged to talk openly about experiences and feel empowered.



It is important for your safety that you seek treatments from practitioners with advanced training in oncology.



PAIN RELIEF MEDICATIONS

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	HOW IT HELPS	MOST COMMON SIDE EFFECTS*
Non-Opioid Pain Medication	Over-the-counter medication that can help reduce inflammation and/or lower fevers; common names are ibuprofen (Motrin and Advil) and acetaminophen (Tylenol).	Decreasing mild to moderate pain	Bleeding and/or bruising problems, liver and/or kidney problems, stomach ulcers
Topical Pain Medication	Topical pain medications like creams and gels can also provide pain relief, like lidocaine and capsaicin. These are also non-opioid pain medications.	Decreasing mild to moderate pain	Irritation, burning and dryness of the skin
Opioid Pain Medication	Reduces the sensation of pain in the body and is prescribed by your care team. May also be referred to as a narcotic. Common names include hydrocodone, fentanyl, and morphine.	Decreasing severe pain	Dizziness and/or lightheadedness, constipation, physical dependence and/or tolerance
Antidepressants	Helps to reduce fatigue and increase sleep. Common names are Amitriptyline, Cymbalta, Effexor, Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft.	Managing emotional pain	Increased appetite and potential weight gain, fatigue and/or drowsiness, dry mouth
Pain Relief Medications for Neuropathy	Provides pain relief caused by nerve damage. Common names are gabapentin (Neurontin) and pregabalin (Lyrica).	Decreasing chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN) pain	Drowsiness, change in walking and/or balance, dizziness

*Side effects listed are the top three most common that occur with the associated pain relief medications. Nausea and/or vomiting may be a side effect experienced with all the pain relief medications.



TALKING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM ABOUT PAIN

If you experience new onset or worsening pain, talk to your health care team because your pain management plan may need to change. It is important to plan for your appointment with your health care team so you can be ready to share information that will help them understand your concerns and determine a pain management plan that is right for you. This document provides space to take notes about your appointment. There are **four ways** you can get ready for this appointment:

1. Determine what you need from your health care team.

Before you meet with your health care team, think about your goal for the appointment. Is it to gather information about the risk and benefits of different pain management strategies? Do you need advice on what to change in your pain management plan?

2. Bring notes about your pain experience.

This is one of the most important steps to get ready for your appointment. Your team needs detailed information about your pain experience so they can help you as best they can. Below are suggestions of information to share with your health care team:

- Previous pain management strategies you have tried.
- Religious or cultural beliefs about pain.
- Current strategies for managing pain.
- Types of medication you are taking.
- Allergies to medications.
- Date and time the pain occurs.
- Where the pain is located.
- When the pain becomes better or worse.
- How long the pain lasts.
- How the pain affects daily activities (cooking, sleeping, exercise).
- What the pain feels like (sharp, dull throbbing, constant, burning, shooting, depressing, tiring, discouraging).

It can be helpful to track this information and bring it with you. This can be done using a calendar, pain diary, notebook, a pain scale tool, or there are smart phone apps that can be used.

Example of a pain diary.



Date & time	Pain score (0 to 10)	Where pain is and how it feels	What I was doing when it started	Name and amount of medicine, and time it was taken	Non-drug techniques I tried	How long the pain lasted	Pain score 1 hour after taking the medicine	Other notes

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No pain		Moderate pain					Worst pain you've ever had			



3. Come prepared with questions.

Know the top questions you need answered at your appointment. Make sure you get all your questions answered before you leave your appointment. If this does not happen ask to schedule another appointment to talk more. Bring a family member or friend who can help listen and take notes during the appointment.

Questions to ask your health care team:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What are my pain management options? | <input type="checkbox"/> Are there other resources to help pay for pain management strategies? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Are there side-effects or risks with different types of pain management? Are there ways I can decrease the side effects or risks? | <input type="checkbox"/> How long will the pain management/treatment work? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What are the benefits of this pain management/treatment? | <input type="checkbox"/> When should I return for a follow-up visit? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a cost with this pain management/treatment? | <input type="checkbox"/> My goal is to be able to
_____. (fill
in the blank, for example, return to
work or play basketball with my
grandson)

Will this treatment help me do that? |

4. Be your own advocate.

You are the most important part of your health care team because you are the one person that can best describe your pain experience! Sharing your concerns does not mean you are complaining. It is important to be open and honest with your team so they can help you.



RESOURCES ON PAIN MANAGEMENT

ACUPUNCTURE

- **Acupuncture Overview** – <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/patient/acupuncture-pdq>

CANCER PAIN GENERAL RESOURCES

- **Managing Cancer-Related Pain Booklet** – https://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/managing_pain_booklet.pdf
- **Cancer Pain Control Booklet** – <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/pain-control>
- **Cancer Pain** – <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/pain/pain-pdq>
- **Facing Forward: Life After Cancer Treatment** – <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/life-after-treatment.pdf>
- **Pain in People with Cancer** – <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/pain>
- **Office of Cancer Complementary and Alternative Medicine** – <https://cam.cancer.gov/>
- **Clinical Trials Addressing Pain: United States (US) National Library of Medicine (NLM) Clinical Trial Database** – <https://clinicaltrials.gov/>

COUNSELING

- **Finding a Counselor** – <https://www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/preparing-yourself/finding-a-counselor>

FINANCIAL

- **American Cancer Society** – <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/finding-and-paying-for-treatment/understanding-financial-and-legal-matters.html>
- **CancerCare** – http://www.cancer.org/financial_assistance
- **The Patient Advocate Foundation** – <http://www.patientadvocate.org>
- **US Pain Foundation** – <https://uspainfoundation.org/resources/>

MASSAGE THERAPY

- **Massage Therapy Overview** – <https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/integrative-medicine/therapies/massage-therapy>

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

- **Patients & Clients Learn about Occupational Therapy** – <https://www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/Patients-Clients.aspx>

PALLIATIVE CARE

- **Palliative Care Provider Directory** – <https://getpalliativecare.org/provider-directory/>
- **Palliative Care in Cancer** – <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/advanced-cancer/care-choices/palliative-care-fact-sheet>

PHYSICAL MEDICINE & REHABILITATION

- **Rehabilitation After Cancer** – <https://www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/healthy-living-after-treatment/rehabilitation-after-cancer>

PHYSICAL THERAPY

- **Move Forward: Physical Therapy Brings Motion to Life** – <https://www.moveforwardpt.com/Default.aspx>

YOGA AND YOGA THERAPY

- **Yoga: What You Need to Know** – <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm>



This document contains general information and is not meant to replace consultation with your health care provider.

This information was developed under guidance of the Michigan Cancer Consortium.

This publication was supported by Cooperative Agreement DP17-1701 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

