

Communicating about Your Pain

TELLING CAREGIVERS ABOUT YOUR PAIN

If you are feeling pain, you need to be able to describe it to those who are trained to help you. Some people find pain very hard to explain. Try to use words that will help others understand what you are feeling. Your doctor and others who are caring for you need to know:

- Where do you feel your pain?
- When did it begin?
- What does it feel like? Sharp? Dull? Throbbing? Steady?
- How bad is it?
- Does it prevent you from doing your daily activities? Which ones?
- What relieves your pain?
- What makes it worse?
- What have you tried for pain relief? What helped? What did not help?
- What have you done in the past to relieve other kinds of pain?
- Is your pain constant? If not, how many times a day (or week) does it occur?
- How long does it last each time?

Pain has different effects on different people. The section below may help you describe the effects that pain has on you. You may want to add other effects that you notice when you're in pain. Be sure that those who are caring for you know about them.

Don't hesitate to talk about your pain to those who can help you. You have a right to the best pain control you can get. Relieving your pain means you can continue to do the everyday things that are important to you. Remember, only you know what you are feeling.

SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF PAIN

- Symptoms accompanying your pain:
 - nausea
 - headache
 - dizziness
 - weakness
 - drowsiness
 - constipation
 - diarrhea
 - perspiration

- Ability to sleep:
 - good
 - fitful
 - can't sleep

- Desire to eat:
 - good
 - some
 - little
 - can't eat

- Emotional effects:
 - fear
 - anger
 - depression
 - crying
 - mood swings
 - irritability
 - suicidal feelings

- Lifestyle changes:
 - work
 - recreation
 - interpersonal relationships
 - ability to get around
 - self-care activities

DESCRIBING THE PAIN INTENSITY

Understanding how bad your pain is helps your doctor decide how to treat it. You can rate how much pain you are feeling by using a pain scale like the one below. Try to assign a number from 0 to 10 for your pain level. If you have no pain, use a 0. A 10 means the pain is as bad as it can be. As the numbers get larger, they stand for pain that is gradually getting worse.

You may wish to make up your own pain scale using numbers from 0 to 100. Be sure to let others know what pain scale you are using, for example: "My pain is a 70 on a scale of 0 to 100."

You can use a rating scale to answer these questions:

- How bad is your pain at its worst?
- How bad is your pain most of the time?
- How bad is your pain at its least?
- How does your pain change with treatment? From _____ to _____
 - 0 = no pain
 - 2 = discomfort

4 = mild pain
6 = distress
8 = severe pain
10 = the worst pain you can imagine

REMEMBERING DETAILS ABOUT PAIN AND PAIN RELIEF

You may find it helpful to keep a record or a diary about your pain and what you try for pain relief. The record helps you and those who are caring for you understand more about your pain, the effects it has on you, and what works best to ease your pain. Items that should be included are:

- the number from your rating scale that describes your pain before and after using a pain-relief measure
- the time you take pain medicine
- any activity that seems to be affected by the pain or that increases or decreases the pain
- any activity that you cannot do because of the pain
- the name of the pain medicine you take and the dose
- how long the pain medicine works
- any pain-relief methods other than medicine you use, such as rest, relaxation techniques, distraction, skin stimulation, or imagery

Call 949 759-8400 to see H Rand Scott MD at Newport Pain Management for you pain today. For more information go to www.newportpain.com