

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

14. Pain

Pain is often the most feared symptom of cancer and can greatly affect quality of life. Pain can lead a person to feel helpless, hopeless and irritable and over time can lead to depression. Unresolved pain can make it hard for people to do everyday things such as cooking, sleeping, bathing and washing, yet it may be hard for friends and family to fully understand what the patient is going through.

Pain may be caused by the tumour itself, by the treatment given for the cancer or by something completely unrelated to the cancer (e.g. arthritis). **The amount of pain someone feels is not related to the severity or extent of their cancer and it is not a reliable sign of the disease getting worse.**

These days most doctors believe that 90-95% of cancer pain can be effectively treated. The difficulty is that professionals do not always regularly ask their patients about pain, and patients do not always report any pain they have, or sometimes fail to take the pain medication they have been prescribed (believing that they may become addicted or develop tolerance to the pain medication). Consequently pain is often undertreated.

What can be done to manage my pain?

- It is important that you tell your doctor about any pain you are experiencing because pain can often be well controlled. There is no sensible reason to be in pain if it can be successfully treated.
- If you are in pain it should be properly assessed and managed by a doctor or palliative care nurse (palliative care nurses are highly trained in supporting patients who experience pain).
- Ensure that you are taking any medication that you have been prescribed for your pain correctly, i.e. the right dose at the right times.
- Many people worry about taking painkillers. If you have any concerns or fears about the pain medicine you have been prescribed then please discuss these with your doctor.
- Alternative methods of pain control may be suitable to treat your pain; e.g. a TENS machine (electrical nerve stimulation), acupuncture, use of heat and cold and massage.
- Anxiety and stress tend to increase pain sensitivity (making it feel worse). Relaxation techniques can help reduce pain by reducing anxiety.
- Distraction can be a helpful strategy by focusing your attention away from the pain and onto something more positive. Engaging in meaningful and stimulating activities can reduce your awareness of pain.
- You may feel better with some emotional and psychological support. Pain can evoke strong feelings, such as anger, anxiety, fear and hopelessness and these emotions can often make the pain seem worse. Therefore talking through these emotions and understanding better what is evoking them often helps. If you do not feel comfortable talking about pain with your friends and family you could try a local support group where you can get the opportunity to talk about your pain with people that know how it feels.
- Try to write down one piece of evidence each day to show yourself how you are positively self managing your pain. Doing this has been shown to increase peoples confidence.

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- Resources/Information

Local Resources:

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| Other: | Discuss with oncology doctor, GP or clinical nurse specialist |
| Boots Macmillan Pharmacist | Barnstaple, South Molton, Ilfracombe and Bideford |

National Resources:

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| The British Pain Society www.britishpainsociety.org | Full of information about pain awareness and management . |
| a way with pain www.awaywithpain.co.uk | Chronic pain support and awareness. Very good section on mindfulness for stress relief and pain management. |
| Mesothelioma UK www.mesothelioma.uk.com Unit 116, Greenacres, The Sidings, Leicester, LE4 3BR | Mesothelioma UK is a national specialist resource centre, specifically for the asbestos-related cancer, mesothelioma. Freephone:0800 169 2409 Mon-Fri 08.30am -4.30pm Email:info@mesothelioma.uk.com |
| Disability Rights UK www.disabilityrightsuk.org General enquiries: 0330 995 0400 (not helpline) | Fact sheets and guides on all aspects of disability |
| Macmillan Cancer Support Line www.macmillan.org.uk Call 0808 808 00 00 7 days a week 8:00am—8:00pm | Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on +44 207 091 2230 |
| Macmillan on-line Community | Online support— to share experiences or vent your emotions find others who understand—join today! |
| Marie Curie Support Line — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support | Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open Monday to Friday - 08:00am – 6:00pm Saturday -11:00am – 5:00pm |

Other Resources :

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| Macmillan Booklets: | Managing Cancer Pain MAC11670 |
| | Managing the symptoms of cancer MAC11671 |
| Marie Curie | Guide to managing your pain |
| Cancer Pain —short video on managing pain | https://youtu.be/1iSPFTDG7Zw |