

PAIN

Need to Knows provide older adults and their families with important information to enhance their hospital or nursing home stays. Communication and teamwork are important aspects of high-quality healthcare. The individual, family, and caregivers are vital members of the team.

Why is it important?

Pain is very common among older adults and is not a normal part of aging. Arthritis, injuries, surgery, and disease may cause discomfort. Pain can affect quality of life and is associated with depression, poor sleep, decreased mobility, falls, lack of appetite, and slower recovery from injury. Decreased mobility related to pain increases risk for blood clots and pneumonia.

What you and your family can do:

Report any pain to your healthcare provider. Include changes in daily life due to pain.

Keep track of your pain.

- When did it start?
- Where do you have pain?
- Is it sharp or dull?
- How long does it last?
- Does it come and go or is it constant?
- What makes it better? What makes it worse?
- Are there any other symptoms in addition to your pain?

Ask your healthcare provider about the best strategies to relieve your pain.

Use non-medication strategies, such as deep breathing, meditation, massage, use of hot/cold compresses, and a calm, relaxing environment to promote comfort.

Talk to your provider about the best medication for your type of pain and how the medication will react with your current medications. What are side effects? How long you should be on the medication?

Report changes in pain during your treatment. Treatment may be adjusted as pain decreases or increases.

What caregivers can do:

Tell the healthcare team if you think your loved one cannot recognize or report the pain themselves.

Make sure you and other caregivers are included in decisions about pain management.

If drugs are prescribed, ask if they are appropriate for older adults and how new medications will react with other medications, what the side effects are, and how long he/she should be on the medication.

Observe and report to their provider any changes in pain. Treatments should be adjusted as pain changes.

