

Baptist is committed to helping patients feel more comfortable.

While patients should not expect to feel excessive pain, a certain amount of discomfort is a normal part of recovery from surgery, illness and injury. The amount and type of discomfort is related to the type of surgery or illness. The important thing to remember is that all staff members of Ochsner Baptist Medical Center are dedicated to helping patients feel comfortable.

- What exactly is pain?
- What role do patients play in pain management?
- How can you help manage pain?
- What about side effects?
- What factors can influence pain?
- What about possible dependence on pain medication?

We believe that managing pain is an important part of the medical care we provide, no matter where you are in the hospital. With today's treatments, most pain – regardless of type and amount – can be well-controlled. When pain is well-controlled, you can be more active; sleep and eat better; and feel more positive. If you are recovering from surgery, controlling pain can help you get well faster.



Learn Ochsner Baptist's pain rating scale.

Ochsner Baptist uses a pain rating scale, an important tool in managing discomfort. With the scale, 0 means no pain and 10 means the worst pain. Your doctor and nurse will teach you to use the scale to describe the amount of pain you may be experiencing. The rating system will help the staff understand how you are feeling and help set a goal for pain relief. A separate pain scale is used for patients who are not able to express when they are feeling pain. Ask your healthcare professional for further details.

Numeric Pain Intensity Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

No Pain	Mild Pain	Moderate Pain	Severe Pain	Very Severe	Worst Possible
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What about possible dependence on pain medication?

A common concern about using medicines called opioids (narcotics) is addiction. Do not be concerned. Studies show that drug related addiction is rare in persons taking medications for pain management.



Managing Your Pain



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What exactly is pain?

Pain is now referred to as the body's fifth vital sign. Pain is your body's way of responding to injury, illness or stress. The pain you feel may be increased by such things as stress or anxiety.

The following are some terms you may hear your healthcare professional use when talking about pain. Pain may be **chronic**, like the pain caused by arthritis or cancer, and persist for months or years. It may be **acute**, such as the pain associated with the normal recovery process from surgery. This pain varies with the type of operation, and while intense, will gradually lessen as the body heals. **Breakthrough** pain is an unpredictable episode of severe pain not controlled by the patient's current pain regimen. Finally, **pathologic** pain is more severe pain than would be expected for the illness being treated. It may indicate a complication or the occurrence of a different medical problem.

What role do patients play in pain management?

Only you know when you are hurting and what kind of pain you are experiencing. Doctors and nurses will work with you to assess your level of pain. Patients must tell their healthcare professional if they have pain. Some patients, including infants and

small children, may not be able to say they are feeling pain. Healthcare professionals will work with parents and families to look for non-verbal clues to ensure that the patient is made comfortable. Do not hesitate to discuss any concerns you have. Tell a staff member if you have taken medication and it is not working. Doctors and nurses need to know as much information as possible.

- Where is the pain located?
- Is the pain sharp, achy or dull?
- How long did it last?
- What have you taken or done that brings relief or eases pain?
- How does the pain affect your daily life and your family's life?
- When should you ask for pain medication?
- When did it start?
- What makes it better or worse?

Tell your doctor or nurse when you feel you need treatment for pain. The best way to control pain is to address it as soon as you begin to hurt. Although all surgical procedures are associated with varying amounts of discomfort, don't try to be brave and put up with pain or wait, hoping it will go away. Being anxious, afraid or tired can make pain worse. If you experience pain, you should ask for medication. It may be necessary to take pain medicine at regular intervals to better manage pain. Research has shown that treating pain promotes the well-being for the whole person.

How can you help manage pain?

Pain medicine often works better when taken on a regular schedule rather than "as needed" in response to discomfort. Also, if you know that pain may worsen with an activity, take medication first to prevent discomfort. Your nurse may be able to assist you with other pain relief measures, such as breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, positioning, splinting, and so forth.

What about side effects?

Occasionally, patients experience mild side effects, such as itching or nausea, from medications. If these occur, tell your doctor or nurse immediately. Side effects can usually be managed.

What factors can influence pain?

Pain is unique to each person. Pain can be influenced by how you feel emotionally and spiritually. For example, if you are worrying about your personal problems, tell your healthcare professional. The staff may be able to help with these issues. Remember that your state of mind can make you feel worse or better.

What is Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA)?

As an in-patient, your physician may order a PCA pump as a way to manage your acute pain. It allows **patients to give themselves** intravenous pain medication as often as every ten minutes via a special pump with a push button control. Studies have shown that this improves patients' pain relief while reducing the overall dose of narcotic pain medication. PCA pumps are very safe. **Only the patient should press the PCA button.**

