

Pain management for children



What is pain?

Pain may be described as a feeling of hurt or strong discomfort and is the body's way of sending a message to the brain that an injury has occurred. Pain can also act as a warning system that protects you. Pain says, 'Warning, warning....stop what you're doing and do something else'. For example, if you have your hand on a hot stove, pain tells you to stop touching the stove and remove your hand. In this way, pain protects your body from further injury.

Why treat pain?

Untreated pain can upset the normal functions of the body and can delay how the body repairs itself. It can also have an effect on your child's behaviour. If your child has had an operation or an accident, it's important for us to help control the pain.

What else can help?

It is important that you/your child understands what is happening. Careful explanations will help reduce anxiety and fear and will help them cope much better.

- The play team can help you/your child explore any issues that are causing anxieties by using play to help them understand what is happening to them. If you feel you/your child would benefit from this please speak to the play specialist on your ward.
- Distracting therapy such as reading stories, watching TV/DVDs or playing can help reduce the amount of pain you/your child is feeling. By keeping the brain busy your child may be able to cope better with any pain signals being sent.
- Simple deep breathing exercises can help your child relax tense muscles, which will also help to reduce the pain.
- Basic comfort measures (such as rocking, holding, massage, relaxing) will help your child cope with the pain. Sometimes placing a hot water bottle or cold flannel over where it hurts can help ease the pain.

- Babies can be comforted for painful procedures by either breastfeeding or by using a pacifier and sucrose solution.

How is pain measured?

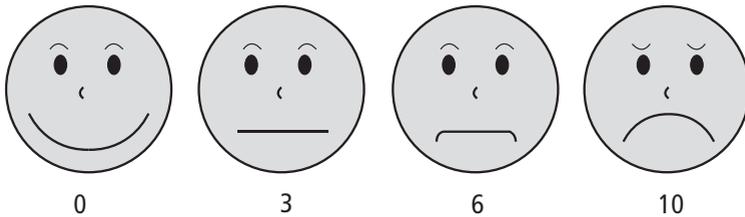
Pain can be measured by using a 'pain tool'. This allows you/your child to tell us how much it is hurting. In this hospital we use three different tools, depending on your age, development and preference.

As babies and young children are not able to tell us how much it hurts we have to use an 'observational tool' (see below).

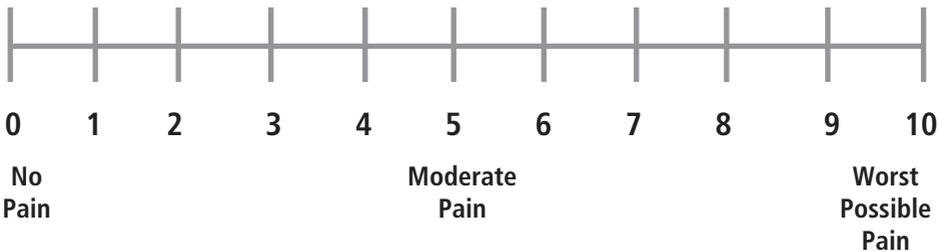
By looking at your baby/young child, you can give them a score of 0, 1 or 2 from each category on the list and then add them together to give a total score of between 0 and 10.

Category	Scoring		
	0	1	2
Face	No particular expression or smile	Occasional grimace or frown, withdrawn, disinterested	Frequent to constant quivering chin, clenched jaw
Legs	Normal position or relaxed	Uneasy, restless, tense	Kicking or legs drawn up
Activity	Lying quietly, normal position, moves easily	Squirming, shifting back and forth, tense	Arched, rigid or jerking
Cry	No cry (awake or asleep)	Moans or whimpers; occasional complaint	Crying steadily, screams or sobs, frequent complaints
Consolability	Content, relaxed	Reassured by occasional touching, hugging or being talked to, distractable	Difficult to console

For slightly older children we can use the 'faces tool', where the child chooses a face that represents how much it hurts.



Older children and teenagers can use a 'number tool' which allows them to choose a number between 0-10, to tell us how much it hurts.



These 'tools' are in your nursing folder and they will be explained to you at either pre-admission or on your admission to the hospital. If you don't understand which tool to use, please speak to your nurse.

You may notice other changes such as feeling sad, crying, sweating, pale skin or flushing, restlessness, irritability, posture or behavioural changes. These may also indicate that you/your child is in pain.

Your nurse will ask you regularly what your pain score is and this will help them to decide how best to treat your pain. If you wish to record your own pain scores please feel free to do so in the table overleaf. Please share this with your doctor and nurses.

Painkillers

Painkillers are medicines that are used to treat pain. They can reduce or stop the 'pain' messages going to your brain.

The type of painkiller that you/your child is given will depend on the type of pain they have, any other health problems, how severe the pain is and the possible side effects of the medicines.

It is safe to take a combination of painkillers.

Children who may be in pain for a period of time, such as following an operation, are recommended to take painkillers regularly until the pain is better. This may include having to wake your child at night. Otherwise, your child only needs to take them as necessary.

Types of painkillers

There are four main types:

Medicine	Uses	Time to work	Side effects
Paracetamol Syrup, tablet, suppository (into the bottom), vein via a drip	Mild to moderate pain.	30 - 60 minutes	Side effects are rare if you do not take more than the maximum recommended dose, however, paracetamol can be very dangerous if you take too much.
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) e.g. Ibuprofen, Syrup, tablet, suppository (into the bottom), vein via a drip	Mild to moderate pain and is useful in treating post-operative pain, bone pain and fever management. Reduces the amount of stronger painkillers required	20 - 30 minutes	Can include: bleeding into the stomach, worsening of asthma, heart problems.

<p>Opioids e.g. morphine, Fentanyl, Oxycodone Syrups, tablets, patches, vein via a drip e.g. continuous infusion or patient/nurse controlled analgesia</p>	<p>Moderate to severe pain.</p>	<p>By mouth: 20 - 30 minutes</p> <p>Into a vein: 1 - 3 minutes</p> <p>Nasally: 20 minutes</p>	<p>Can include: Feeling sick and being sick, constipation, dizziness and disorientation, itchy skin.</p> <p>The risk of addiction is extremely low if taken as prescribed.</p>
<p>Local anaesthetics Ointments e.g. ametop, epidural, nerve blocks</p>	<p>Numbs the area of the body receiving treatment.</p>	<p>Ametop: 30 - 40 minutes</p> <p>All other routes: few minutes</p>	<p>Side effects are rare but can include: Numb tongue, dizziness, blurred vision, twitching muscles.</p>

Taking oral morphine home

Why has my child been given oral morphine (Oramorph®)?

- Oral morphine has been prescribed for your child to help with pain after their surgery.
- Oral morphine should only be given if your child remains in pain after giving paracetamol and ibuprofen.
- Please ensure you keep this medicine out of reach of children, preferably in a locked cupboard.
- Do not give this medicine to anyone else.

Instructions

The amount of oral morphine to give your child has been calculated on your child's weight and is written on the bottle. The amount you are giving to your child may seem very small but oral morphine is a strong painkiller so only small amounts are required. You have been provided with oral syringes to measure these properly.

It is important that you follow the instructions about how much to give.

If your child continues to be in pain after giving oral morphine, please contact the hospital for further advice. See contact details below.

If you have any oral morphine left in the bottle after 2 weeks please take it to your pharmacy for disposal.

What else should I look out for?

If your child seems very sleepy and you are finding it difficult to wake them, or they have problems with their breathing, or stop breathing, your child may have had too much morphine. **Phone for an ambulance straight away.** Take the medicine container or pack with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor.

Your child's medicines

Before leaving the hospital please make sure you know:

- which painkillers your child has
- how much to take
- how often to take them
- any side effects
- any special instructions.

It may help to fill in the table overleaf.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about your medicines once you have gone home, please contact the ward to discuss this with either your nurse or doctor, or contact your GP.

Further information

www.nhs.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

www.patient.co.uk

Name of medicine	Last given/ next dose due	Any special instructions

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

