

How to Reduce Pain or Discomfort Without Medicine

General Information

Medicines are a great way to relieve pain. However, sometimes they don't last long enough or cause too many side effects.

Your nurse can give you many ways to relieve pain or discomfort that don't involve medicine. Please ask your nurse for more information about any of the following treatments.

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy uses essential oils to encourage your body's natural ability to relax and heal. Studies have shown that using aromatherapy helps reduce pain, anxiety, nausea (upset stomach) and insomnia (being unable to sleep).

Activity

Spending too much time lying down or sitting in one position can cause pain, muscle cramps or fatigue. Going for a walk can help reduce discomfort and nausea. By being active, you shorten your recovery time and you lower your risk for pneumonia, blood clots and constipation.

Back Rub or Massage

Massage helps to reduce pain, anxiety, muscle tension and stress.

Effleurage (Gentle Massage)

Effleurage is a type of gentle massage that involves little to no pressure. It uses gentle strokes on your skin to relax your muscles and helps get your blood flowing. It is good if you don't like or don't want a regular massage.

Bath or Shower

Standing under a hot shower can reduce pain, ease sore muscles and help you relax.

Breathing and Relaxation

Your nurse can show you some easy breathing exercises that can reduce pain. This helps lower your heart rate and blood pressure and increase blood flow to your muscles. Relaxation techniques are shown to increase mood and reduce feelings of stress.

Changes to Your Environment

Simple things like dimming the lights, lowering the curtains, turning off the TV, closing the door or adjusting the temperature in your room can help you rest and relax. These changes can also help if you have headaches or migraines.

Heat or Warm Pack

Heat reduces pain by causing your vessels to open. This increases oxygen flow to help ease stiff joints and sore muscles. Use heat or a warm pack for 20 minutes at one time. If you have reduced blood flow or sensation, heat is not right for you.

Talk with your nurse about how often you can use heat to help prevent skin damage.

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Ice or Cold Pack

Cold reduces discomfort and swelling (inflammation) by numbing nerve endings. It is great to help ease pain after surgery. It can also be used for back pain, arthritis and headaches. Use ice or a cold pack for 20 minutes at one time.

Talk with your nurse about how often you can use ice to help prevent skin damage.

Change Positions in Bed

You may not be able to get out of bed. Changing the position of your body in the bed often — every 2 hours — can reduce pain and discomfort. Making sure your hips, back and head are in proper alignment can be a great way to prevent muscle strains, joint or back pain.

A member of your health care team will help you change positions.

Rest

Activity and moving is important for your recovery. However, you may do more activity than your body can tolerate. Allowing your body to rest is also important when recovering from a surgery or major procedure.

Pace your activities and movement with rest. As you recover, slowly do more activities.

Your doctor may want you to try other options not listed here.