

How and When to Take Pain Medications



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To help pain medicine work best, instruct patients and families:

- Be sure they have the right medication, the right dose, and that they are taking it at the right time.
- Take medicine as directed. It is usually recommended that pain medicine is taken on a regular schedule (by the clock). Taking medicine regularly and as the nurse or physician suggests helps keep pain under control.
- Do not skip a dose of medicine or wait for the pain to get worse or for the pain to come back before taking their breakthrough (or rescue) dose. The best way to control pain is to prevent it.
- Check with the doctor or nurse before starting any new medication, even over the counter medicines. Some medications may work well with others and some do not.
- Know when to take extra (breakthrough) medicine. If some activities, such as riding in a car, make your pain worse it may help to take a dose of pain medicine before these activities or as soon as possible after these activities. The goal is to prevent pain before it starts.
- Treating pain is important, and there are many medicines and treatments that can be used. If one medicine or treatment does not work, there are others that can be tried.
- If a schedule is inconvenient or the administration route is difficult, changes can be made. Talk to the hospice interdisciplinary team; work together to find the pain medicine and treatments that will help the most.

