

# Cancer Pain Management: What You Need to Know



**PATIENT  
EDUCATION**

Often, people living with cancer worry about pain. This booklet discusses some of the common misunderstandings and fears about pain control and management.

### **Concern: The medication will not control my pain**

Almost all pain can be controlled. At Roswell Park, medications are the most common way to control pain. There are different types of medications for different types of pain. Physical or occupational therapy, psychological therapies (biofeedback, stress management, etc.), and procedures may also help control pain.

### **Concern: I will get addicted to pain medication**

We want to assure you and your family that addiction among patients in pain is very rare! Taking the medication as prescribed will not make you an addict. If you are worried, please talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. Not all prescription pain medications are opioids. Increasingly, other types of medications are also used to treat pain.

### **Concern: Side effects of taking pain medications**

Opioid pain medications can have side effects such as sleepiness, nausea, dizziness, and constipation but these problems can be treated. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor or nurse so they can help.

### **Concern: Doctors and nurses will think I am being difficult if I mention my pain**

Your doctors and nurses want to find the cause of your pain, so it is important to discuss all your symptoms. They will examine you, ask specific questions about your pain, and possibly order diagnostic tests. The pain doctors work hand in hand with your oncologist to find the cause of your pain and make you more comfortable.

### **Concern: Asking for pain medication too soon**

The right time to treat pain is when it starts. This is true even with strong medications. It is very important to take the pain medications exactly as your doctor prescribed in order to keep your pain under continuous control.

### **Concern: More pain means my condition is worse**

New or increased pain can be a signal that there is a problem or that disease has progressed, *but* there are many other reasons for pain. That is why it is so important for you to have an honest discussion with your doctor or nurse – to find the cause of your pain and treat it.

### **Measuring Pain**

It is every patient's right to have appropriate pain assessment and pain management. To help control pain, it must be measured. Pain can be measured with numbers, words, or symbols. At Roswell Park, your doctor or nurse

will ask you to describe your pain as a number using a 0 to 10 scale:



no pain	mild			moderate			severe			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

We don't want you to be in pain and we have many tools to help control your pain. Please talk to your doctor or nurse if you are having any pain.

## How can I get an appointment in the Pain Management Center?

Talk to your oncologist about the possibility of being seen in the pain clinic. Your oncologist will need to give you a referral.