

Managing Your Baby's Pain

Pain management has many benefits, including a quicker recovery! Overall, your baby will have greater comfort while healing. Unrelieved pain can cause anxiety, irritability, and problems with eating and sleeping, which can slow healing and disrupt treatment. However, a total absence of pain is often not realistic nor always achievable. Keeping your baby comfortable allows your baby's energy to be used for healing and recovery instead of dealing with pain. You, along with your doctor or the Pediatric Pain Service, will decide which method of pain management is best for your baby.

Measuring Pain

Never assume doctors or nurses know your child is in pain. No one knows your baby as well as you do, so it is important to help your child communicate to the staff how he or she feels before the pain becomes too severe. You can expect health professionals to respond quickly to reports of pain. The nurse will look at your baby's behaviors like crying, movement, agitation, body language and vital signs to gauge the level of pain. They will use an appropriate pain scale tool to measure pain in newborns and premature infants.

Pain relief without medicine

- Infants and children feel more secure when parents are present. Being loving and caring are comforting ways to support your baby in pain. Cuddling, rocking and using a pacifier can also provide comfort.
- Distraction shifts attention from the pain to something more pleasant. For older infants and children, some forms of distraction are television, movies, games, music, blowing bubbles, pop-up books and being read to.
- With older children, deep breathing increases relaxation and eases pain. Have your child "blow the pain away", or have them imagine a favorite place or event to take the focus off the pain.
- Contact your Child Life specialist for additional ideas and resources to help with your baby's pain.
- It is important for babies to continue normal, enjoyable activities to the extent possible while in the hospital. These methods alone are usually not enough for strong pain, so medicine may be necessary.

Pain relief with medicine

- Pain medicine can be given by mouth in pill or liquid form, by rectum (suppositories) or through the skin.
- A constant level of pain medication can be given through an IV.

Going home

If your baby has pain, you will be given information on how to care for your baby's pain at home. Medications used appropriately are very safe and effective and addiction is not a concern with short-term use. Ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about your baby's medication.