

## FAST FACTS: Pain 101

Pain is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. There are two main categories of pain: Acute Pain and Persistent or Chronic Pain.

### ✓ Acute Pain

- Has a distinct beginning
- Usually has a known cause
- Short lasting
- Common causes are trauma or postsurgical pain

### ✓ Persistent or Chronic Pain

- Does not resolve in the expected amount of time.
- Often associated with damage to the body and psychological issues.
- May occur without any past injury or trauma.
- Can vary in character and intensity over time.
- Chronic pain occurs at least half of the days for 6 months or more; after 6 months, is it called persistent pain.

### ✓ Pain Assessment

- To determine the best course of treatment, your loved one's health care provider will perform a complete evaluation to determine:
  - Underlying cause of pain.
  - Pain characteristics.
  - Impact of pain on physical, emotional, and social functioning and quality of life.
- Your loved one's report of pain is the most reliable evidence of intensity and impact on function.
- Your loved one's health care provider should assess for pain at each visit and use a standard pain scale.

### ✓ Pain Management

- The goal of pain management is to find the correct balance between pain relief, functional impairment, and side effects of any medication used for to treat pain. A combination of drug and nondrug treatments may lower the dose of medications needed and reduce side effects from those medications.



- Nondrug treatment approaches may include physical and psychosocial therapies.
  - Physical Therapy examples: exercise (walking, tai chi, yogi), Acupuncture, TENS, Massage, Heat.
  - Psychosocial Therapy examples: Cognitive-Behavioral therapy, Guided Imagery with progressive muscle relaxation, Music, Meditation.

✓ **What Else You Should Do**

- Write down and share information about your loved one's pain with their healthcare provider.
- Use a [Pain Diary](#) to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
- Encourage your loved one to try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on their pain in their Pain Diary.

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**Reference**

Reuben DB, Herr KA, Pacala JT, et al. Geriatrics At Your Fingertips: 2021, 23rd Edition. New York: The American Geriatrics Society; 2021.