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 healthcare 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 report of pain is the most reliable evidence of intensity and impact on function
    - Your healthcare 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.
    o Physical Therapy examples: exercise (walking, tai chi, yoga), Acupuncture, TENS, Massage, Heat.
    o 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 pain with your healthcare provider.
  • Use a Pain Diary to note important information useful to the healthcare provider.
  • Try a non-drug treatment and document the impact on your pain in your Pain Diary.

Reference