

FAST FACTS: Nondrug Pain & Symptom Management

The following is an overview Nondrug Pain Treatment Techniques. Such treatments include activities or experiences that help provide relief of physical and psychological symptoms of pain, either with or without the use of medications.

Mild-to-moderate pain may be relieved by nondrug techniques alone. Moderate-to-severe pain may require medication in addition to nondrug techniques. Some nondrug treatment techniques may require professional oversight to perform.

As a caregiver, you can review these techniques and discuss them with your loved one's healthcare team if you have questions or need assistance. This site also has specific FAST FACT pages for some of the Nondrug Treatment Techniques listed below; check with your loved one's healthcare provider if you are interested in other techniques mentioned.



✓ Physical Nondrug Treatment Technique Examples

- Massage
- Cold
- Heat
- Positioning
- TENS
- Acupuncture
- Tai Chi
- Walking
- Yoga
- Qigong

✓ Psychological Nondrug Treatment Technique Examples

- Distraction
- Relaxation
- Music
- Controlled Breathing and Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness-based Meditation
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

✓ Advantages to Nondrug Treatment Techniques

- Low cost
- Low risk of side effects
- Improved sleep
- Improved interpersonal relationships
- Increase in loved one's sense of control and hope
- Decrease in undesired reactions (such as: anxiety, depression, aggression)

✓ Possible Disadvantages Nondrug Treatment Techniques

- A technique that works well for one may not work for someone else.
- Some techniques may require special training as outlined in the respective Fast Fact.

✓ **What Else You Should Do**

- Determine which Nondrug Treatment Technique is of interest to your loved one and encourage them to use this as a pain management treatment.
- Ensure you are trained appropriately prior to implementing any Nondrug Treatment Technique, speak with a professional or loved one's healthcare team to determine correct technique or where to find training.
- Assistance as needed with implementing Nondrug Treatment Techniques for loved one (i.e. turn on music, position cold pack, etc.).
- Document all Nondrug Treatment Techniques on your loved ones [Pain Diary](#) and log pain information before and after use of Nondrug Treatment.

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References

Adapted from Beth Miller-Kraybill, Nondrug Pain & Symptom Management, and Nursing Home Pain Management Algorithm Clinical Trial, R01 NR009100, 7/1/05 – 4/30/10; Mary Ersek (PI). Used with permission of Mary Ersek and HPNA (2009).

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