

How to Manage Pain

This guide will help you understand:

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This guide is written for people living with kidney disease and those who help care for them. It does not replace advice from your healthcare team (for example, your nephrologist, nurses, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, and family doctor).

What is Pain?

Pain is feeling hurt or uncomfortable anywhere in the body.

- You may feel it all of the time or only some of the time
- Pain is a common symptom experienced by people living with kidney disease
- Everyone feels pain differently. Only you know how much pain you feel and how it affects you – you are the best judge
 - Your healthcare team may ask you to describe your pain on a scale from 0 to 10 – with 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst possible pain
 - Your healthcare team may ask you to describe your pain as burning, shooting, piercing, stabbing, electricity, throbbing, or sharp



What Causes Pain?

Understanding the cause of your pain will help your healthcare team treat it in the best way.

Things that might cause or worsen pain include:

- Some illnesses or diseases.
- Medical procedures and tests
- Dialysis treatments (for example, pain from cramping or needling a fistula)
- Other problems, such as constipation and nausea
- Stress and anxiety
- Emotional, social, and spiritual impact of kidney disease





- Start slowly and go at your own pace
- If you are not already active, talk to your healthcare team about how to safely start activity
- There are also many exercises that can be done while seated
- If you are already active, talk to your healthcare team about your activities and make a plan to keep doing them or change what you are doing

If you need help making a plan to be more active, ask for a referral to a(n):

- Occupational therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Exercise specialist
- Rehabilitation specialist
- Registered massage therapist



What Can I Do To Manage Pain?

Treating your pain may help you sleep and eat better, enjoy time with family and friends, and do your work or hobbies. You can play an active role in your pain management. It often includes a combination of treatments, and you may have to try a few different things before you find the ones that work best for you. It is important to update your healthcare team with any changes to make sure your pain is being managed.

Be Active and Exercise

- Even small, simple exercises may help your pain:
 - Walk to the end of your driveway or up and down your hallway
 - Ride an indoor bike, do gentle yoga and stretching, or swim



Find Support

It is normal to feel upset and frustrated when you are in pain. You can find support in your community and through your healthcare team.



These tips can help you get support:

- Talk to someone you trust and who is a good listener (for example, a friend or family member) about how your pain makes you feel
- Talk to your family doctor
- Talk to someone at a place of worship spiritual or religious advice may help you feel better
- Join a kidney disease support program to share stories with other people. Many hospitals and The Kidney Foundation of Canada offer support programs where you can get in touch with others who can share their experiences.
- Join a chronic pain self-management group
 - These programs have special sessions to teach you how to manage your pain
 - Ask your healthcare team about classes in your community



Pain can have an impact on your mood. If you feel like you may be depressed or anxious, ask your healthcare team to speak to a social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or someone who is an expert in helping people living with kidney disease cope.

Get Physical Relief

Ask your healthcare team about other treatments before you use them, for example:

- Rubs like diclofenac (for example, Voltaren Emulgel)
- Using heat and/or ice on the body to relieve pain
 - Heat and ice may not be safe if you have numbness from nerve damage – check with your healthcare team

Relaxing Activities and Managing Your Stress May Help to Control Your Pain These activities may help you relax:

- Breathing exercises
- Distraction activities, for example, watching TV or playing computer games
- Healthy coping activities, for example, walking outside, gardening, enjoying nature, reading, listening to music, or visiting with family and friends



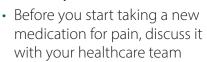
Some people find other therapies help them take control of their pain. Be aware that sometimes how well they work and how safe they are has not been proven. They may also cost a lot of money. Speak to your healthcare team if you have questions about other therapies that you may be interested in.

Keep Track of Your Pain

- Keeping a record of your pain can help you and your healthcare team to understand and manage it
- · Write down your symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them:
 - What does the pain feel like?
 - When does it happen?
 - How long does it last?
 - How bad is it?
 - What makes it better or worse?

Medications to Help Control Pain

Medications might help to control pain that cannot be controlled in other ways.





- Take medications the way they are prescribed
- Talk to your healthcare team if you think you are having side effects from the medications
- Talk to your healthcare team if the medication you were prescribed is not working well, is not needed anymore, or if you are worried about addiction or dependency

Be safe!

Medications to control pain, even over-the-counter pain medications, can have extra side effects for people living with kidney disease

When Should I Talk To My Healthcare Team?

Tell your healthcare team if you develop any of these symptoms:

- Chest pain
- A pain that you have not had before
- · Pain that is not going away or is getting worse

Notes			

The Ontario Renal Network gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide.

This document is designed to provide people living with kidney disease with information about pain. It is not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional, nor is it intended to provide a comprehensive list of treatment options. As treatment options and standards are constantly evolving, we do not guarantee that the information in this document is current. Always ask your healthcare team if you have questions or concerns.

Need this information in an accessible format?