Managing Your Child's Short-Term Pain at Home



WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY CHILD'S HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

Once you're home, your child should start to feel better. If she doesn't, or if you see new symptoms, CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.

CALL IF YOUR CHILD:

- Has pain that doesn't get better or gets worse
- Has a fever over 101°F (38.4°C)
- Is dizzy, lightheaded, or fainting
- Is hard to wake up, won't stay awake
- Is not making sense when she talks
- Is vomiting a lot
- Itches
- Isn't peeing (urinating) or pooping (is constipated)
- Has redness or swelling around an incision or catheter
- Has any other symptoms that worry you

LEFTOVER MEDICATION?

Don't keep leftover medication around the house. Ask your pharmacist where to take them or look online at useonlyasdirected.org.

Why pain management is important

Many injuries and medical procedures do not require an overnight stay in the hospital. This means your child may be ready to go home before all the pain is gone. When you go home, **there's a lot you can do** to help your child feel better.

Helping your child feel less pain will help her body heal.



Before you go home

Before you leave the hospital or clinic, talk with your child's healthcare providers about how you can help manage her pain at home. These are some questions to ask:

- What kind of pain should we expect? Should it go away soon, or last a long time? Should it get worse before it gets better? How will it change?
- How will my child's pain medications help her? How can they hurt her? What are the side effects of her medication? How are they different from complications?
- What activities does my child need to be able to do to get better? When should she crawl, walk, breathe deeply, drink water, or eat food?
- Who should I call if I have questions or concerns? Should I call my family doctor or the hospital? Who should I call at night or on the weekend?

Tracking your child's medication

To prevent medication mistakes, write down the name of the medication you give your child, when you give it, and how much you give. This will help you remember if you've already given medication to your child, and help keep you from giving too many doses. The chart below is an example of how you should track your child's medication.

| MEDICATION | TIME | HOW MUCH? |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|
| Example: Ibuprofen | 1:45 PM | 200 mg |
| | | |
| | | |

Where does it hurt?

You and your healthcare providers need to know how your child is feeling. If he can talk, ask these questions:

- Where does it hurt? (Shoulder, knee, back, etc. Have him touch where it hurts.)
- When does it hurt? (When I lift my arm, lay on my side, all of the time.)
- How much does it hurt? (Use a number between 1 and 10, where 10 is the worst pain ever, to create a pain "score.")

Call your healthcare provider if the pain doesn't get better or gets worse. Here are some ways to take care of your child's pain at home:

1 Manage your child's pain

- Give medications only as directed by your healthcare providers. This will help keep the pain from getting worse, and make it easier to manage. Never give your child extra medication, or give medication more often than your healthcare provider says is okay. The pain will get better soon. Then you will be able to wait longer between doses.
- Don't give your child Tylenol (acetaminophen) or anything that has Tylenol in it without asking your healthcare provider if it's okay. You may not know that another medication your child is taking may already have Tylenol in it. If you give more, you could accidentally give too much.
- Look for signs that your child is in pain. Pulling his legs toward his chest, a worried face, sweating, and an increased heart rate can all be signs of pain. If your child says he's in pain, it's safer to treat it right away than to wait. If you've given medication and it doesn't seem to be working, call your healthcare provider.
- **Use cold or heat.** Cold packs can bring down swelling and help with short-term pain. A heating pad or hot towels can ease aching muscles and stiff joints. Ask your healthcare providers how these therapies can help your child.
- **Use other pain management strategies.** Keep your child's mind off his pain by playing "pretend," singing or listening to music, playing electronic games, watching movies, or cuddling with the family pet.

2 Keep your child comfortable

- **Treat upset stomach.** Some pain medications can make your child vomit or feel sick to his stomach. Ask your healthcare providers how to give your child food and drink without making him sick.
- **Treat constipation.** Some medications cause constipation. Give your child water to drink and high-fiber snacks. Ask your provider if you need to give a laxative.
- **Help your child stay comfortable.** Make sure he stays warm. If he likes to suck his thumb or a pacifier, or comfort himself in some other way, try to control the pain enough that doing those things won't hurt.



HOW WILL MY CHILD RESPOND TO PAIN?

Being in pain can change the way your child acts. Your child may be feeling pain if he:

- Needs more attention.
 Your child cries more and may start acting like a younger child.
- Doesn't sleep well. Your child may be afraid to sleep alone, be more afraid of the dark, or have nightmares or night terrors.
- Is upset and anxious.
 Your child may be waiting for something painful to happen. He may not trust people he doesn't know, especially healthcare workers.
- Scratches or picks the skin. He may also start biting his nails.
- Is frustrated. Your child may get angry about things that normally don't bother him.
- Asks questions about his body. Expresses fear or curiosity about death.
- Is not hungry or active.
 Your child may not want to
 eat, drink, play with toys, or
 move around.