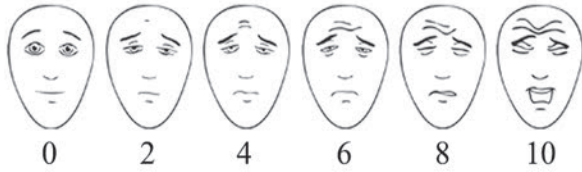


Pain Management: Keeping a Pain Diary



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Everyone experiences pain differently. You may be able to do things even when you hurt. Someone else may not feel like they can get out of bed.

Pain can feel sharp or dull. It may throb or burn. You may feel it one place in your body, such as with a headache or stomach ulcer. Or you may feel it all over your body, like when your muscles ache from the flu. And some people feel pain deep in their organs from an injury or a health problem such as cancer.

Pain may come and go or it may be constant. It may hurt for a little while or a long time.

How tracking your pain helps

It's your pain and it's your body. Your doctor can't tell by looking at you how you're feeling. But when you can describe your pain and how bad it is, your doctor can help.

Pain may be something you have to live with for a long time. But you and your doctor can work together to come up with a plan to help ease your pain enough so that you're more comfortable, happier, and able to focus on what's important to you.

Understanding your pain-when it happens, what causes it, and what makes it better-can help you discover ways and things you can do to manage your pain.

Without tracking, it can be hard to remember how you felt last week compared to how you feel right now.

A pain diary also helps uncover:

- Pain triggers. For example, does it hurt before or after you eat?
- Patterns. For example, does it hurt more during the day and less at night?
- Emotions. For example, does stress seem to be making your pain worse?
- Challenges. For example, how does pain affect your life each day?

How to keep a pain diary

While tracking takes your time, you may find that it can show you and your doctor when your pain is not getting better or is worse. You may discover that your pain is actually decreasing a little bit each day.

Along with how much or how little you're hurting, your doctor may want to know other things such as:

- Do you take any medicine for the pain? If so, what is the dose? Do you have any side effects?
- Does the pain move from one part of your body to another?
- Does it hurt to move? For example, do you have pain when you stand up after sitting? Or does it hurt when you do certain chores or bend down to tie your shoes?

Your pain diary

The faces in the image show how much something can hurt. You can use these faces to help choose a number that shows how much you or your child hurts right now. The face on the left shows no pain. The other faces in turn show more and more pain. The face on the right shows the worst pain you have ever known. For example, if you have a "2" on the scale, your pain may be minor with stronger twinges now and then, but it doesn't impact your ability to do things. If you have an "8" on the scale, you may have very strong pain that makes it hard to do anything.

Using a pain scale and a pain diary can help you describe how much pain you're having. These tools also can help you tell your doctor what your pain feels like so that he or she can help you.

You can use this diary or make one of your own. The following form is just one way to track how you feel. Any method for tracking can work if it's something you like and can keep using. If you want, use the pictures of the faces to help you track your pain.

Date	Time	Pain-scale rating	Medicine and dose	Medicine side effects	What made the pain better today?	What made the pain worse today?

Keeping a pain diary can help you and your doctor find out what works best to manage your pain. You can use it as long as you both find it helpful.