

# Pain

Having cancer pain controlled is an important part of your treatment and care. There are different ways pain can be managed. The earlier it is managed the more effective it is. Your doctors and nurses will aim to find the pain relief that suits you best.

You can have pain for different reasons. It may be caused by the cancer pressing on tissue nearby, or on a nerve or bone. Some treatment side effects can cause pain. How you feel emotionally is linked to the pain you feel. When pain is managed, you can keep doing the things in life that are important to you.

Strong painkillers may cause side effects, but these can usually be controlled. If you are worried about taking strong painkillers, talk to your doctor or nurse.

There are different types of painkillers and ways of taking them. Painkillers can be given as:

- tablets or capsules
- a liquid
- skin patches
- tablets you absorb through the lining of your mouth
- an injection under the skin, or into a vein (as a drip)
- a continuous injection under the skin through a small pump.

Other drugs are also used to help control pain. These include:

- steroids
- bisphosphonates to relieve bone pain
- anti-nerve pain drugs.

Treatments such as radiotherapy, surgery or a nerve block can also be used. A talking therapy called cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) may help you cope better with pain. Some people find certain complementary therapies useful.

## Tips to help with pain

- Tell your doctors and nurses if you have pain. Pain management is more effective the earlier it is done. Delaying taking painkillers can make pain more difficult to control.
- Describe your pain clearly. Explain where it is, what it is like, when it happens and anything that makes it better or worse. It may help to keep a pain diary to describe your pain.
- Take your painkillers as they have been prescribed. The pharmacist or nurse can give you advice about this. If the pain gets worse, tell your doctor. They can change the dose or the painkiller you are taking.
- Watching TV, listening to music or talking to a friend may distract you and help you cope with pain.
- Talking to a family member, friend or partner about your feelings may help. If you need more specialist help, your doctor or nurse may refer you to a counsellor or psychologist.
- Tell your doctor if you are thinking about trying any complementary therapies. Some of them may affect other treatments you are taking.

**Local resources:**

Resource	Contact details

**National resources:**

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The British Pain Society</li> <li>• Pain Concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><a href="http://www.britishpainsociety.org">www.britishpainsociety.org</a></b> Tel 0207 269 7840 Email <a href="mailto:info@britishpainsociety.org">info@britishpainsociety.org</a></li> <li>• <b><a href="http://www.painconcern.org.uk">www.painconcern.org.uk</a></b> Tel 0300 123 0789 Email <a href="mailto:info@britishpainsociety.org">info@britishpainsociety.org</a></li> </ul>

**Further information**

[macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/pain](http://macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/pain)

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk)

- **Managing cancer pain**
- **Managing the symptoms of cancer**
- **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer**

**More information and support**

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](http://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.