

Pain Management Strategies

Coping strategies allow cancer patients to modulate pain sensation and decrease its perceived level. This means actively influencing how the brain interprets and responds to pain signals, making the pain more manageable even if the underlying physical cause persists.

Psychological and Behavioral Interventions: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

These methods help manage the emotional distress often linked with pain by changing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Helps you identify and change unhelpful thoughts and behaviors that worsen pain.

Changing Thoughts: Replacing "My pain is unbearable" with "I can use my coping tools to manage this."

Relaxation Techniques

Reduce muscle tension, anxiety, and stress, which can intensify pain.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): Tensing and relaxing muscle groups one by one (e.g., feet, then legs) to release tension.

Guided Imagery: Listening to recordings that guide you to imagine a peaceful scene, diverting focus from pain.

Mindfulness-Based Interventions

Body Scan: Bringing gentle attention to different body parts, noticing sensations without trying to change them.

Mindful Breathing: When pain occurs, simply observing the breath and the pain's qualities (sharp, dull) without judging it.

Distraction

Physical/sensorial distraction: Focus and stimulate the senses.

Cognitive distraction. Get involved in a mental activity.

Behavioral distraction: Engaging in simple activities can shift your attention away from pain such as spending time with loved ones, engaging in conversations, hobbies or crafts

Sleep Hygiene

Good sleep is vital, as lack of sleep can lower your pain threshold.

Sleep Hygiene continued

Consistent Schedule: Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily.

Optimized Environment: Ensure your bedroom is dark, quiet, and cool.

Avoid Stimulants: Limit caffeine and alcohol, especially in the evening.

Environmental Modifications

Simple daily adjustments and changes to your surroundings can significantly reduce pain.

Pillows/Cushions: Use extra pillows to support joints or your back while resting or sleeping.

Ergonomics: Adjust seating, bed height, or workspaces to reduce strain on painful areas.

Place personal items frequently needed near you.

Self-Monitoring Pain

Regularly tracking your pain can provide a sense of control over it and aid communication with your healthcare team.

Pain Diary: Record your pain level (e.g., 0-10 scale), specific location, time of day, how often it occurs (frequency), and any other associated symptoms (e.g., nausea, fatigue, mood changes). Bring this detailed record to your medical appointments to discuss with your care team.

These approaches DO NOT replace medical treatment. Always discuss your symptoms with your medical team to develop a pain management plan.

Resources

Your emotional health is important. To learn more or to get additional support, contact your oncology team to get a referral for Psychology at Baptist MD Anderson or contact us at (904) 376-3800 Baptist Behavioral Health.

Other Resources

American Cancer Society

<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/cancer-control/en/worksheets/pain-diary.pdf>

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/pain/cancer-pain/non-medical-treatments-for-cancer-pain.html>

National Cancer Institute <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/pain-control>