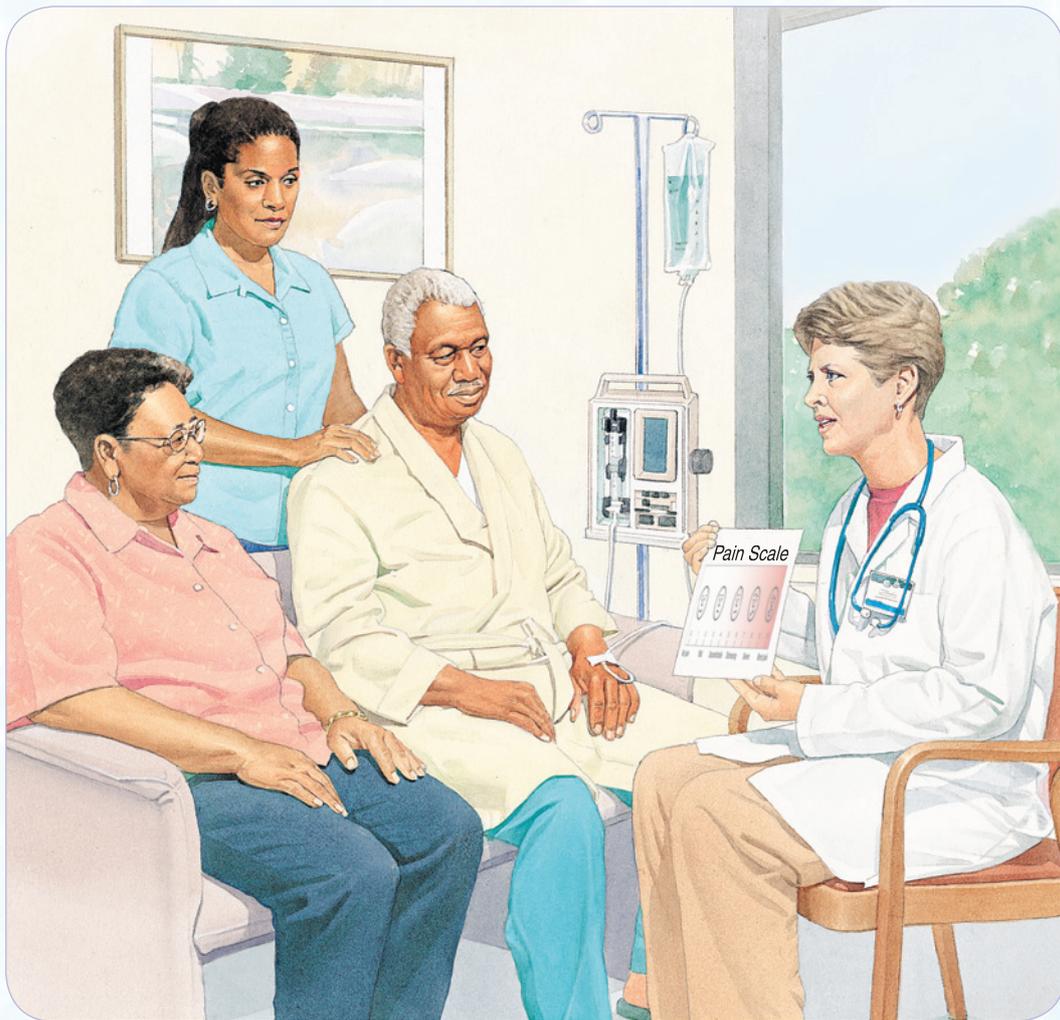


# Understanding Your Pain



Medications and Other Treatment  
to Improve Quality of Life

# Pain Can Be Managed

Is pain taking over your life? Are you afraid the pain will never stop? Your pain is important. It can slow healing and keep you from being active. Work with your healthcare provider. Together you can find relief. Reading this booklet can help you learn more.

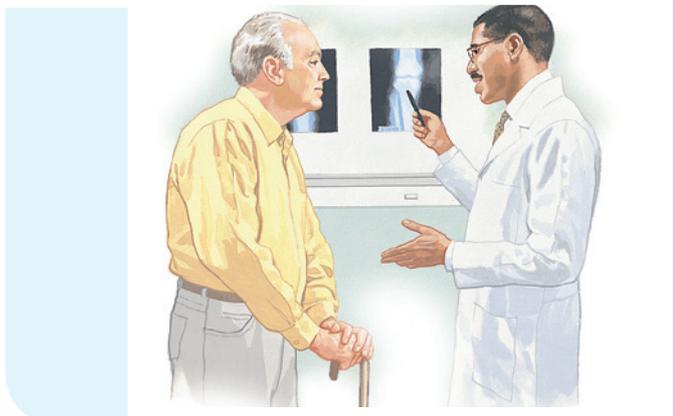
## Types of Pain

You may have acute or chronic pain. Both types of pain respond to treatment.

**Acute pain** is caused by a health problem or injury. The pain goes away when its cause is treated. You may have pain:

- From an illness or injury that needs emergency care.
- After an operation, such as heart surgery.
- During and after the birth of your baby.

**Chronic pain** lasts at least 3 to 6 months. It can be caused by a health problem or injury, such as arthritis or a shoulder injury. Chronic pain can also exist without a clear cause.



This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.

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## Communication and Treatment

You have a right to have pain treated. Untreated pain can limit eating, sleeping, and activity. Tell your healthcare provider where and how much you hurt. It may not be possible to relieve all the pain. But your healthcare provider can help you reach a pain level you can live with.

### Your Role

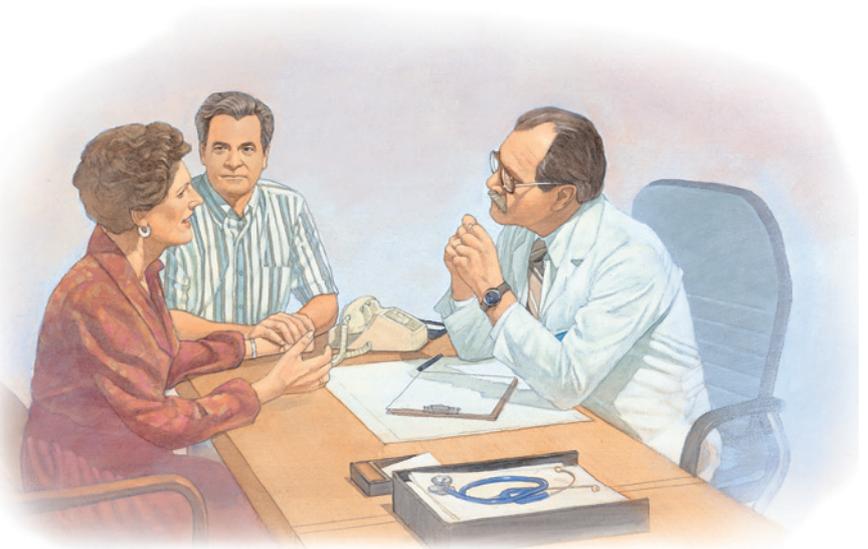
Tell your healthcare provider about the pain and your health history. Be sure to:

- Mention all the medications you take. This includes any you buy over the counter. Mention any herbs, teas, or vitamins you take, too.
- Mention any pain relief techniques you use, such as massage or meditation.
- Measure pain as directed.
- Follow your treatment plan. Tell your healthcare provider how well treatment works.

As pain is reduced, you'll feel better. Less pain means less stress on your body and mind. Then you can be more active.

### Your Healthcare Provider's Role

Your healthcare provider will help you measure and manage pain. You will be told about your pain control options. These will most likely include medications. Options like physical therapy and acupuncture may also help.



### Note

#### *for Family and Friends*

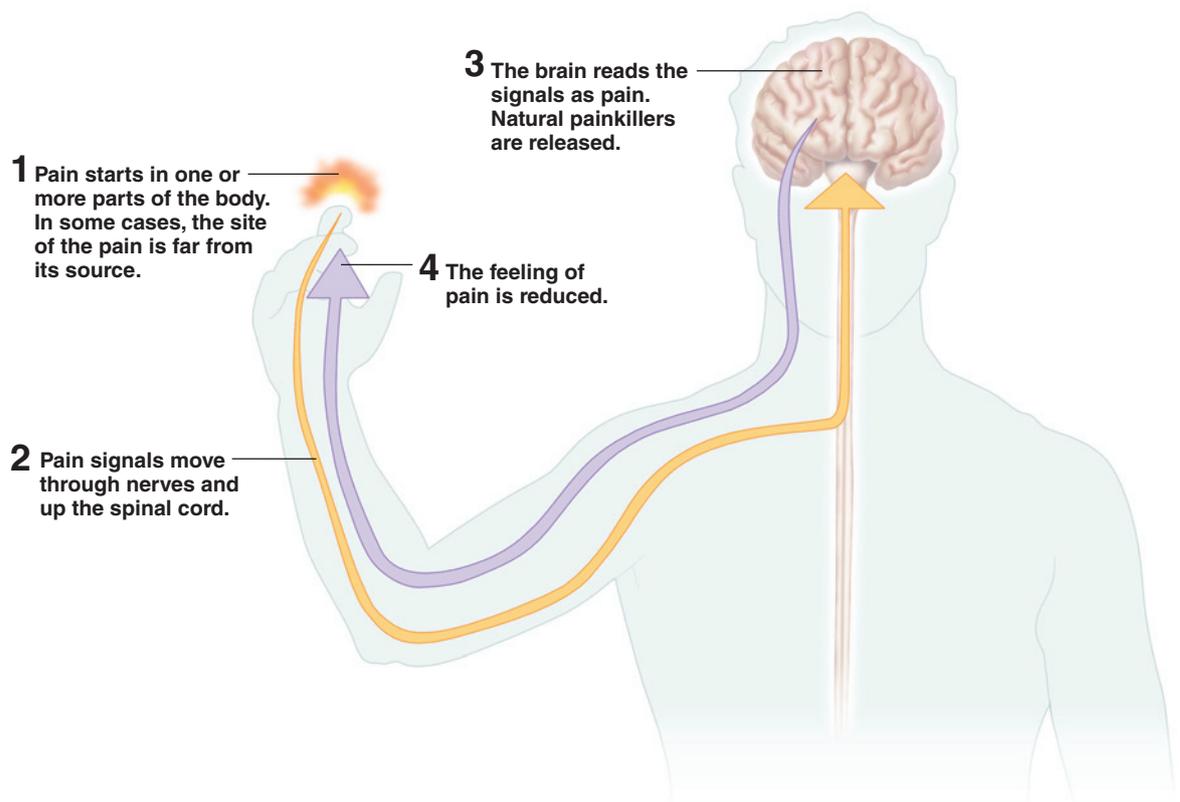
It may be hard to understand how your loved one feels. But the pain he or she has is real. You may not be able to stop the pain. You can help in other ways, though. Spend time with your loved one. This helps distract from the pain. And help him or her take medications on time, if needed.

# Learning About Pain

You can increase your control over pain by learning how it works. Then you can measure and track the pain. The results will help your healthcare provider plan the best treatment for you.

## Your Perception of Pain

All pain signals travel to the brain. The brain sends back signals to protect the body. The brain also sends out its own painkillers (**endorphins**). These can help reduce the pain.

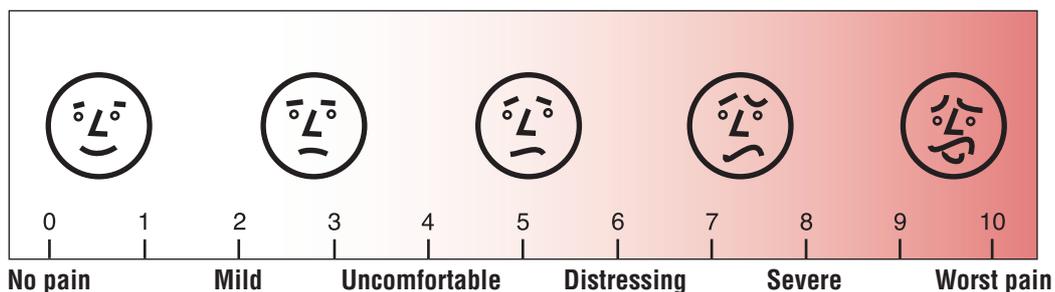


## Watching for Pain Triggers

Think about what causes your pain or makes it worse. For instance, do certain movements make you hurt? These can include getting out of bed, bending, or going for a walk. Is the pain more intense at the end of the day or when you become tired? Tell your healthcare provider about any pain triggers you have. Then your treatment can be adjusted to work better for you.

## Measuring the Pain You Feel

A pain scale helps you rate pain intensity. In the scale below, 0 means no pain, and 10 is the worst pain possible. (Scales may go up to 5 or up to 10.) Rate the pain every few hours. You may feel some pain even with medications. But tell your healthcare provider if medications don't reduce the pain. Be sure to mention if the pain suddenly increases or changes.



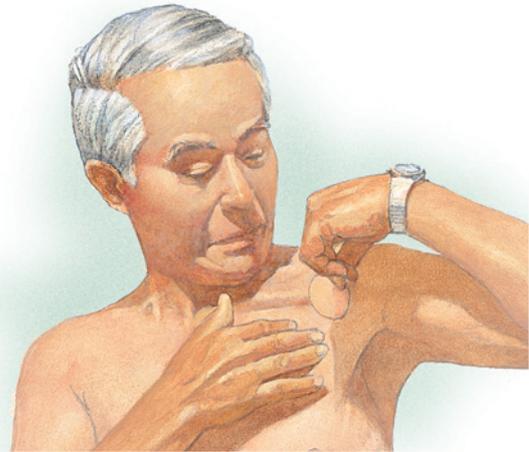
## Tracking the Pain

Keep track of your pain each day. You might copy the pain journal on this page or use a small notebook. Show the journal to your healthcare provider.

Date	Time	Where you are	Trigger (if known)	Description of pain	Pain rating	Action taken
	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM					
	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM					
	<input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM					
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# Medication Delivery

Medications will help control pain at home, as well as in the hospital or clinic. There are many ways to take them. You may use pills or patches, or a special pump, for instance. As you feel better, the way you receive medications may change.



## Pills and Tablets

Some medications are taken by mouth. Be sure to take them as directed. Some are swallowed and others are allowed to dissolve in the mouth.

## Patches and Suppositories

A patch placed on the skin provides medication over a few days. Some medications are placed in the rectum.

## Will I Become Addicted?

Addiction is a craving for certain medications. This is of concern for some patients who are prescribed opioids. Opioids are manmade pain relievers. They do not contain opium. Addiction is very uncommon if these medications are used as directed. It is normal, though, for the body to get used to opioids. This is called **physical dependence**. You may feel shaky, for instance, if you stop treatment too quickly. To avoid this, you will be eased off opioids. This will be done when you no longer need them.

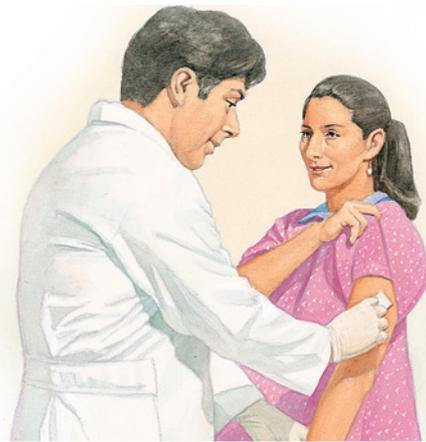


## IVs and PCA Pumps

With **IV (intravenous)** delivery, a **catheter** (small tube) sends medications into a vein in the hand or forearm. A **PCA** (patient-controlled analgesia) pump uses an IV to supply medications. The pump is programmed as directed by your doctor. That way, you always get a safe dose of medication when you press the button. Only you should push the PCA button. Otherwise, your pain may not be treated fully and properly.

## Injections

In some cases, injections are used for overall pain relief. Injections can also relieve pain in specific areas. For instance, a steroid injection into a joint can block joint pain. Or a **nerve block** might be used. It can stop pain signals from traveling along a nerve.



## Regional Anesthesia

Regional anesthesia controls severe pain. Medications are delivered near the spine. These methods (**epidural** or **spinal**) block pain in one section of the body, often from the waist down.

# Types of Medication

Medications can block pain, prevent swelling, and treat related problems. More than one medication may be used. Medications may be changed as you feel better, or if they cause side effects.

Medications	What They Do	Possible Side Effects
<b>Analgesics</b> (non-opioid and NSAID)	Remove feelings of pain. Used for mild to moderate pain. May prevent joint and soft tissue inflammation.	Nausea, stomach pain, ulcers, indigestion, diarrhea, bleeding, kidney or liver problems.
<b>Opioids</b>	A type of analgesic. Remove feelings of pain. Used for moderate to severe pain.	Nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, constipation, slowed breathing.
<b>Other Medications</b> (steroids, antiemetics, antidepressants, and anticonvulsants)	Reduce swelling, burning or tingling pain. Limit certain side effects of pain medications.	Your healthcare provider will explain the possible side effects of these medications.
<b>Anesthetics</b>	Stop pain signals from reaching the brain. They block all feeling in the treated area.	Nausea, low blood pressure, fever, slowed breathing, fainting, seizures, heart attack.

## When to Call the Healthcare Provider

Call your healthcare provider right away (or have a family member call) if you have:

- Unrelieved pain.
- Side effects, including constipation or uncontrolled nausea, that interfere with daily activities.
- Extreme sleepiness or breathing problems.

# Pain Management at Home

Your healthcare provider will explain how to manage pain at home. Continue to measure your pain. You may need to take medications and use self-care to help you feel better.

## Taking Medications

Medications work best when they are taken on time and as your healthcare provider instructs. Don't skip or add doses. Keep these tips in mind:

- Store and take medications as directed.
- Take medications with food or milk if so instructed.
- Try to time taking your medications to fit your day. Take them 20 minutes before starting an activity, such as dressing or exercising.

## Self-Care

You may be asked to use ice, elevation, compression wraps, or heating pads. Controlling stress and worry can also reduce pain. To feel calmer, take 3 deep breaths. Inhale through your nose. Then exhale slowly through your mouth.

## Preventing Constipation

Many medications cause constipation. Eat high-fiber foods, drink more fluids, and take special medications as instructed. Walking or other movement also helps. You may be asked to try to use the bathroom at certain times daily.

### Note

#### *for Family and Friends*

Missed doses can make pain harder to control. So you may need to wake up your loved one to take medications. Ask him or her to measure the pain often. And ask your loved one to report how well treatment is working.



# Beyond Medications

You can use more than medications to ease pain. Being active and relaxing can help reduce pain and stress.

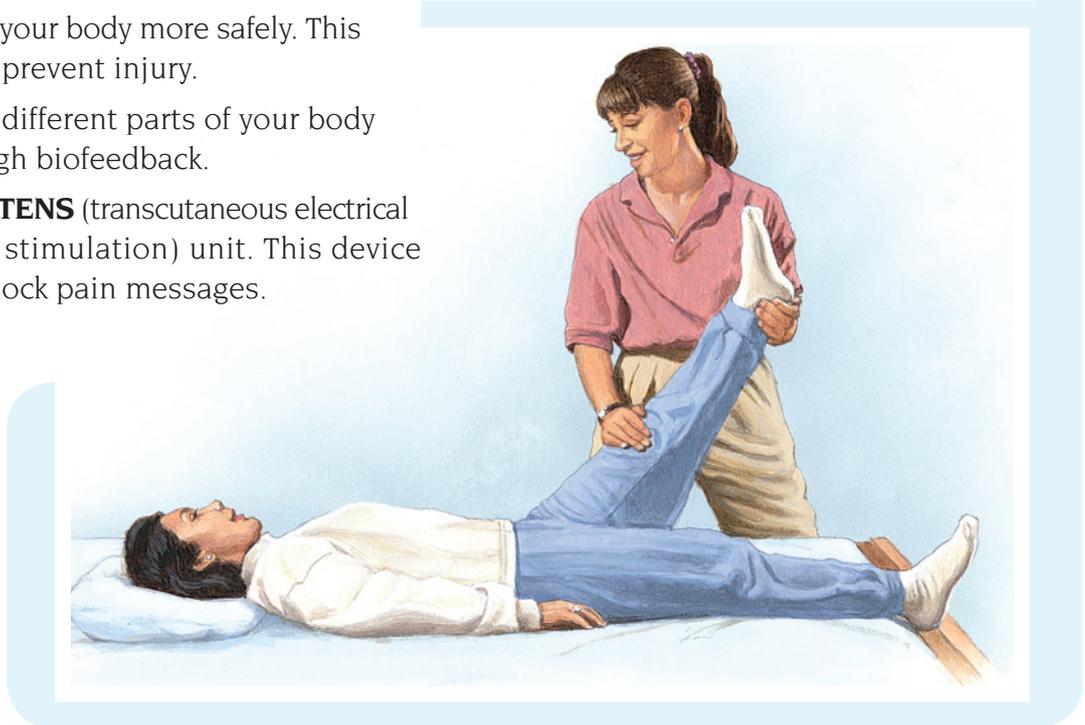
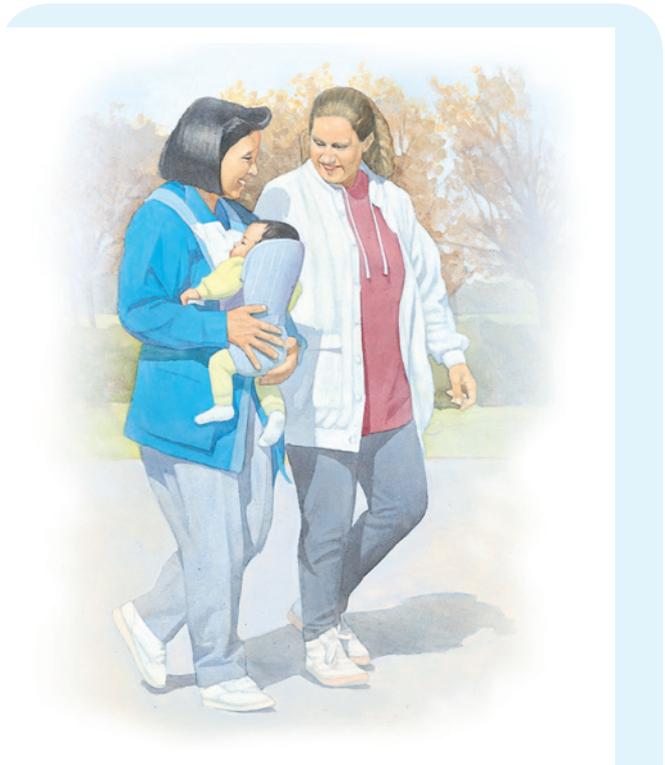
## Activity

Being in better shape can help reduce pain. Your healthcare provider may suggest increasing your activity. Start small and do a little more each day. You might try walking or doing errands.

## Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation may help you be more active. A specially trained therapist may work with you. You may learn to:

- Build strength by working certain muscles. This will make daily tasks easier to do.
- Build flexibility. This increases your pain-free range of motion.
- Move your body more safely. This helps prevent injury.
- Relax different parts of your body through biofeedback.
- Use a **TENS** (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit. This device can block pain messages.



## Complementary Care

You may find relief with complementary care. Look for a licensed or certified professional. And tell your healthcare provider that you are using complementary care.

- **Massage** can increase circulation and relaxation. This relieves stress and pain.
- **Chiropractic** adjusts the spine. It can help reduce back, neck, or joint pain. Chiropractic may also use mild electrical stimulation, massage, heat, or ultrasound (sound waves).
- **Acupuncture** uses thin needles to help treat pain. The treatment may release the body's own painkillers.



## Other Options

These options can also help you handle pain better:

- **Distraction** helps you focus on something besides pain. Try reading a book, watching a movie, or talking with family. Or visit a local attraction.
- **Meditation** helps you focus on one word, object, or idea. Doing this can calm you and decrease stress.
- **Relaxation** includes listening to soothing music or relaxation tapes. You might try slow, deep breathing. Imagine a calm scene such as an ocean or mountain as you breathe.



# Staying in Control

You can manage your pain and improve your quality of life. To do this, learn what medications you take and how to take them. Also, tell your healthcare provider how well treatment is working. For more help, ask about local resources. Or use the ones listed below.

## Resources

- **American Pain Foundation**  
888-615-7246  
[www.painfoundation.org](http://www.painfoundation.org)
- **American Chronic Pain Association**  
[www.theacpa.org](http://www.theacpa.org)
- **American Academy of Pain Management**  
[www.aapainmanage.org](http://www.aapainmanage.org)

## My Medications

## How to Take Them

Example:

Ibuprofen, 400 mg

4 times a day with food

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