Comfort Measures and Pain Management

When you are in the hospital or recovering at home, you may experience discomfort and/or pain. Pain is your body's way of sending a message to your brain that help is needed. It can occur due to surgery, illness, or injury. Discomfort can be related to many things – a different bed or pillow, not being allowed to eat or drink, or feeling stiff or tired.

As part of your care at Mount Carmel, we know keeping you comfortable and managing your pain will aid in your recovery. Although we may not be able to keep you pain-free, we will make every effort to provide comfort and manage your pain.

We offer many comfort measures that we have found are helpful. Talk with your nurse and other health care providers about what you would like to try and what seems to work best for you.

Activities to improve comfort
Be sure to check with your care team before doing these. You may need help with some of these:
- Gentle stretching
- Changing your position in bed
- Getting up to a chair
- Walking
- Bathing
- Adjusting temperature or lighting in your room
- Visiting with a chaplain

Relaxation Aids
- If you like background music or "white noise, try TV channels 31-34.
- Take slow, deep even breaths.
- Close your eyes and picture a peaceful place in your mind.
- Try to have some uninterrupted quiet time. Some of our care teams have specific times set for this. Talk with your nurse and family members about your needs.

Things to help distract you
These can help with boredom or distract you from your pain or discomfort:
- Listening to music
- Watching TV
- Reading
- Visiting with family and friends
- Playing cards
- Working in puzzle books - crossword, word searches, Sudoku

For your physical comfort
- Ice pack or heat pack
- Warm blanket or washcloth
- Extra pillow
- Mouth swab
- Saline nose spray
- Humidification for oxygen tube

For your personal care
- Lip balm
- Toothbrush/Tooth paste
- Deodorant
- Comb
- Shampoo
Checking on Your Pain

We will be asking you questions about your pain. You can use a number or face on this scale to rate your pain.

Pain Medication

Although comfort measures are very helpful, you may need medication to help manage your pain. Pain medications are available in injections, pills, and patches. Your doctor will order the types of pain medicine that will work best for you.

Whatever kind of pain medication you are getting, it is most helpful to take it before the pain gets severe. Don’t wait too long to ask for your pain medicine. This makes it harder to get relief.

Types of Pain Medication

- **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®) helps relieve mild to moderate pain. It is often combined with other medications to increase the effect of pain relief (Percocet®, and Norco®).

- **NSAIDS** (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Aspirin, Ibuprofen, and Celebrex® reduce swelling and soreness. They relieve mild to moderate pain and work well alone or with other pain medicines.

- **Narcotics** such as Morphine and Dilaudid®, are given for moderate to severe pain.

Common Side Effects of Pain Medication

Tell your nurse if you have any of these side effects or other symptoms of concern:

- **Nausea or Vomiting** – You may have stomach upset with pain medication especially after surgery or when taking other new medications.

- **Sedation** – Some pain medication may make you feel very drowsy or sedated. The nursing staff will check on you often to make sure you are safe.

- **Dizziness** – Sometimes after being in bed, having surgery, and taking pain medications, you may feel dizzy when you attempt to get out of bed. A staff member must be present the first time you get up. Be sure to call for help before getting out of bed. Sit on the edge for a few minutes before standing.

- **Constipation** – Some pain medications affect your bowels by slowing them down. Getting up and walking as soon as you are able is most helpful. Drink plenty of fluids. Your doctor may order a stool softener or laxative if needed. Do not ignore the urge to have a bowel movement.

As You Recover

As you recover, your need for pain medication should decrease. Continue with your comfort measures as long as needed. Talk with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your pain management during your recovery.