

Other Possibilities

- ♥ If you have other techniques that work well for you and your child/youth, let your healthcare team know.
- ♥ Other pain-relieving methods include biofeedback, therapeutic touch, Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS), acupuncture, and acupressure. Use of many of these methods requires special training or equipment.
- ♥ When treatment of pain is difficult, more specialized health care professionals may be able to help, such as physiotherapists, anesthesiologists or psychologists.
- ♥ You are encouraged to ask your healthcare team about options to help control your child/youth's pain.



Adapted with permission from *Let's Talk.. About helping manage your child's pain*. Iowa Health Centre. Primary Medical Centre, 07/1999 and *Pain, Pain, Go Away: Helping Children with Pain*, by J.P. McGrath & J. Ritchie, Association for the Care of Children's Health, 09/1997.

What can be done to treat my child/youth's pain?

- ♥ The health staff will ask you or your child/youth about past experiences with pain. This helps them to understand your child/youth's pain and to know how he or she will act if there is pain.
- ♥ A nurse will check your child/youth's pain level regularly, using a pain measurement scale (see pamphlet entitled "**Recognizing Pain in Hospitalized Children**").
- ♥ Together, you and health team members will probably use 2 or 3 of the following methods to keep your child/youth comfortable: non-medication methods, over-the-counter medications, and/or opioid (morphine-like) medications.

For more information on pain in children, see our companion pamphlets, *Using Medication to Manage Acute Pain in Hospital* and *Recognizing Pain in Hospitalized Children and Youth..*

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Helping to Manage Pain in Children and Youth Without Medications



CHEO

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Non-Medication Methods

There are many different ways to help reduce pain and anxiety without using medication. The following are some of the most popular methods that parents have used to help their children/youth.

- ♥ **Distraction:** Play and activities can be a useful tool to help ease your child/youth's pain. Reading, watching a movie, and playing cards are just a few of the activities that can be helpful. For children/youth admitted to CHEO, child life specialists are available to assist with finding appropriate activities.
- ♥ **Language:** Let your child/youth know that you see that he or she has pain. Use words that show support, hope, love, encouragement, and understanding. Use a calm, soothing tone of voice. Remind your child/youth that the hurt is being treated and will get better.
- ♥ **Music:** Children/youth enjoy music in many forms. You can sing (or encourage your child/youth to sing), play audiotapes, or play an instrument. Music gives your child/youth something to focus on besides the pain, which can be an important coping strategy.



- ♥ **Cold:** Cold packs or cold cloths help reduce swelling and are helpful for short-term pain. Place cold packs on the sore or swollen area ten minutes every hour. Use cold with infants and small children only as directed by your doctor. Also be careful using cold when your child/youth has nerve damage or a skin injury. Never place cold packs directly on the skin; always use a thick layer of cloth to protect skin from cold.
- ♥ **Heat:** Warm water baths, warm compresses, and warm water bottles are soothing for achy muscles, stiff joints and muscle spasms. Ask your doctor or nurse for instructions for applying heat. Do not put heat on recent injuries or surgical areas. To avoid burns, never microwave warm compresses.
- ♥ **Massage:** Massage helps to relax tight muscles and relieve spasms. Put warm lotion or oil in your hands and rub sore areas.



- ♥ **Touch:** Holding, gentle patting, rubbing, and stroking are touches that can show support and comfort with or without words. Patting works well for infants and younger children and may remind them of comforting routines at home. Rubbing or stroking backs, arms, legs or feet can help your child/youth to focus on something different.



- ♥ **Imagery:** Children/youth can often use their imaginations to alter the feeling of pain and to gain a sense of control over it. This is a skill that can be used throughout life to cope with stress and promote relaxation. The Child Life Specialists at CHEO can help you learn more about guided imagery.
- ♥ **Relaxation:** Deep breathing and relaxation can relieve pain and anxiety. Children/youth can pretend they are "wet noodles" to relax tight muscles, or they can tighten and relax muscles from head to foot. Counting breaths and focusing on slow breathing can also be helpful.

