



Tips for Careworkers: Pain Management

What it is: Pain can be physical or emotional. Older people often have pain. This includes physical and spiritual pain.

Why it matters: Pain is a very common symptom in chronic progressive illness. People in need of palliative care often have more than one type of pain. Careworkers spend a lot of time with the older person and may notice signs of pain or changes in the level of pain experienced.

What I need to know: The expression of pain is different for everyone. It will be affected by the person's experience, attitudes, and beliefs. Palliative care helps to manage pain and improve quality of life. The aim is to manage pain in line with the person's wishes.

Pain that is not properly treated can cause:

- a person to eat and move less
- a person to avoid other people
- poor sleep
- depression
- family distress.

Unrelieved pain may affect cognitive function. It may contribute to an increase in challenging behaviours and delirium.

Nursing staff are responsible for assessing a person's pain. Careworkers can play a part by reporting discomfort noted during care.

Do

Careworkers can look out for signs:

- report if a person has had any difficulties with walking, moving, normal activities
- report if a person says they are in pain
- monitor the person's response to prescribed pain treatments
- notify a nurse/supervisor if comfort measures have been tried but are not effective
- report any discomfort.

Do

You can help relieve pain:

- by repositioning the person
- by reassuring the person, by word and by action, that they are safe
- with therapies e.g., gentle massage or application of warmth.

Do

Careful positioning of people who are immobile can minimise muscle pain and cramps.

Name:

My reflections:

What are some of the signs that a person is in pain?

What comfort measures could I try to reduce the pain felt by an older person?

Who would I speak to if an older person is crying out in pain during care?

My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice
Tip Sheets:
Myths about Morphine
Opioid Analgesics
Palliative Care

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit
palliated.com.au/Practice-Centre/For-Careworkers