

HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT OF WOUND-RELATED PAIN



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What questions might my GP ask me about my pain?

You may find it helpful to write down your answers to these questions so you can be prepared.

When you visit your GP to discuss your pain, they will likely ask a series of questions to understand your condition better and to determine the most appropriate treatment. Here are some common questions they might ask:

- ✓ **Location:** Where are you experiencing pain?
- ✓ **Intensity:** On a scale of 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst possible pain), how would you rate your pain?
- ✓ **Duration:** How long have you been experiencing this pain (in hours per day, days in a week, months, seasons)?
- ✓ **Quality:** Can you describe the pain? Is it sharp, dull, throbbing, burning, etc.? If the pain is in more than area it may be different
- ✓ **Onset:** When did the pain start? Was it sudden or gradual?
- ✓ **Frequency:** Is the pain constant or does it come and go?
- ✓ **Triggers:** What activities or conditions seem to make the pain worse?
- ✓ **Relief:** What, if anything, helps to relieve the pain?
- ✓ **Impact:** How is the pain affecting your daily activities and quality of life?
- ✓ **Associated Symptoms:** Are there any other symptoms that accompany the pain, such as nausea, dizziness, or swelling?
- ✓ **Previous Treatments:** Have you tried any treatments or medications for the pain? If so, what were they and how effective were they?
- ✓ **Medical History:** Do you have any other medical conditions or a history of similar pain?
- ✓ **Previous non-pharmacological interventions** –Have you tried any other approaches to manage the pain? e.g. Heat, cold, mindfulness, alternative therapies? If so, what were they and how effective were they?

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Pain can sometimes be associated with a wound infection so your doctor may ask you about whether you have pain in your wound specifically.

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What treatment might my GP suggest for my pain?

There are several strategies for managing pain, and the best approach often depends on the type and cause of the pain. Here are some common pain management strategies:

Medications

For mild pain - Over-the-counter (OTC) analgesics such as those that contain paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin.

Dressings may also help to reduce wound-related pain. Talk to your GP about whether you experience pain or discomfort whilst the dressing, bandage and or device is in place. Also, do you experience pain on dressing removal? If so, this is important to report.

For chronic / long term pain

Prescription medications: Including muscle relaxants, and certain antidepressants or anticonvulsants for nerve pain.

Weak opioids (for example codeine, dihydrocodeine, and tramadol may also be prescribed).

Physical Therapies

Exercise: Tailored exercise programs can help improve strength and flexibility, reducing pain.

If you are experiencing oedema (swelling) associated with lymphoedema or venous disease (including venous ulceration) compression therapy (which includes compression bandaging, compression hosiery or compression wraps) may be prescribed.

Physical therapy: Techniques such as massage, heat/cold therapy, and ultrasound.

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Occupational therapy: Helps patients adapt their activities to reduce pain.

Positioning and supporting of a limb may also be helpful, limb elevation can also help to reduce swelling

In the presence of lower leg oedema compression therapy may also be used.

Mind-Body Techniques

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT): Helps patients manage pain by changing the way they think and behave.

Relaxation techniques: Such as deep breathing, meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation.

Biofeedback: Teaches control over certain bodily functions that can help reduce pain.

Interventional Procedures

Injections: Such as corticosteroid injections or nerve blocks.

Surgery: In some cases, surgical intervention may be necessary to address the underlying cause of pain.

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How might complementary therapies like aromatherapy or music therapy help with the management of pain?

Complementary therapies like aromatherapy and music therapy can be very effective in managing pain and improving overall well-being. Here's a bit more about each:

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy involves using essential oils extracted from plants to promote physical and emotional health. These oils can be inhaled, applied to the skin, or used in baths. Aromatherapy can help:

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- ❖ **Reduce pain and inflammation:** Certain essential oils, like lavender and eucalyptus, have anti-inflammatory properties.
- ❖ **Improve mood and relaxation:** Scents like lavender, chamomile, and ylang-ylang are known for their calming effects.
- ❖ **Enhance sleep quality:** Oils like lavender and valerian can help improve sleep patterns.

Music Therapy

Music therapy uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs. It can involve listening to music, singing, playing instruments, or composing music. Benefits include:

- ❖ **Pain relief:** Music can distract from pain and reduce the perception of pain.
- ❖ **Stress reduction:** Listening to soothing music can lower stress levels and promote relaxation.
- ❖ **Emotional expression:** Music provides a way to express emotions and can improve mood.

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Can distraction methods help with wound-related pain?

Yes, distraction methods can be very effective in managing wound-related pain. These techniques work by diverting the patient's attention away from the pain, which can help reduce their perception of it. Here are some common distraction methods:

Cognitive Distraction Techniques

Listening to Music: Music can be a powerful distraction, helping to shift focus away from pain.

Reading or Watching TV: Engaging in a good book or a favorite show can help take the mind off the pain.

Puzzles and Games: Activities like crossword puzzles, Sudoku, or video games can keep the brain occupied.

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Behavioural Distraction Techniques

Talking with Someone: Engaging in conversation can be a simple yet effective way to distract from pain.

Walking or Light Exercise: Gentle physical activity can help reduce pain and improve mood.

Crafts and Hobbies: Activities like knitting, drawing, or painting can be both distracting and therapeutic.

Guided Imagery and Relaxation

Guided Imagery: Visualizing calming and pleasant scenes can help reduce pain perception.

Deep Breathing and Meditation: These techniques can promote relaxation and help manage pain.

Virtual Reality (VR)

VR Experiences: Virtual reality can immerse patients in a different environment, significantly reducing their perception of pain. There is some emerging evidence for the use of VR in individuals with burn injuries*, but further research is needed to determine its effectiveness in individuals with other wound aetiologies.

* Lou, Jiaqi et al. 2024. Effects of Virtual Reality on Analgesia in Wound Care and Physical Therapy for Burn Patients: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. Pain Management Nursing, Volume 25, Issue 4, 377 – 388.

Benefits of Distraction Techniques

Reduces Anxiety: Distraction can help lower anxiety levels, which can, in turn, reduce pain.

Enhances Mood: Engaging in enjoyable activities can improve overall mood and well-being.

Decreases Medication Use: Effective distraction can reduce the need for pain medications, minimizing potential side effects.

These methods can be particularly useful during wound care procedures, such as dressing changes, which can be painful.

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Who should be the first contact when I am experiencing wound related pain.

The pain management must be planned in collaboration with healthcare professionals. When experiencing wound related pain, you should always inform your GP, Pharmacist or home care nurse about previous medication and its impact on your pain, overall health status and your ability to function.

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Are there any risks related to pain medication?

If you follow the instructions for taking the medicine from a healthcare professional, an overdose of the medicine is very unlikely. If the pain medication is not relieving your pain, you need to report this to the nurses and be seen by your GP. If you feel that pain medication is affecting your ability to carry out normal daily activities, you feel more tired or sleepy, inform your doctor or other healthcare professional with whom you are in contact. To minimise the effect of drug interactions, it is always necessary to inform your GP and / or Nurse about previous medication and experiences with pain treatment.

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I'm afraid I may overdose on pain medication.

Although there could be differences in healthcare systems and care provision – you should always contact your GP or home care nurse and provide her with the description of your discomfort feeling and pain description. Depending on local availability there may be special clinics for pain management, and you could be referred there by your GP or wound care specialists if you meet the referral criteria.