

Reducing Moderate to Severe Pain

Why is reducing residents' pain so important?

Pain can affect residents' daily activities and quality of life and can cause depression, sleeplessness or restlessness, or cause residents to become distressed or lose their appetites. The Advancing Excellence Campaign believes "Nursing home residents will receive appropriate care to prevent and minimize episodes of moderate or severe pain."

How can nursing assistants help prevent or minimize residents' pain?

- Recognize that the resident's pain is subjective; pain is different for different people; what may be mild pain to one may be excruciating to another person.
- Learn which residents have chronic pain.
- Ask residents about their pain, or observe residents for pain; notify the charge nurse if a resident says she has pain or if you observe the signs of pain in residents who cannot communicate.
- A resident with dementia may not be able to verbally tell you he has pain; observe for signs of pain in facial expressions – gritted teeth, frowning, grimacing, etc. or other behavior, such as pacing, aggression or agitation.
- Ask residents who are unable to sleep if they are in pain.
- Read the care plans of residents to learn resident-specific interventions for pain.
- Monitor residents who have pain for nutritional intake and weight loss.
- Learn how to engage residents with pain in activities to prevent isolation.
- Recognize that residents may not want to admit they are in pain because they think they are not being a "good patient." Sometimes they may describe being "uncomfortable" rather than being in "pain."
- Follow your nursing home's protocols to identify and manage resident pain.
- Participate in in-services related to pain management.
- Talk to the charge nurse if you have questions.
- Talk to the charge nurse if you have a suggestion that you think might work better for a resident.



Pain Resources

Campaign Resources:

- "Implementing Change in Long-Term Care"
<http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- "Campaign Goals and Objectives"
<http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>
- "Top 10 Ideas to Involve All Staff in Advancing Excellence"
<http://www.nhqualitycampaign.org>

Best Practice Resources:

- Pain Management Toolkit
<http://nursinghomes.tmf.org/OtherClinicalInformation/PainManagement/PainManagementToolkit/tabid/557/Default.aspx>

Links to Relevant Organizations:

- National Pain Foundation
<http://www.nationalpainfoundation.org>
- Michigan Pain Management
www.michigan.gov/painmanagement
- National Association of Health Care Assistants
<http://www.nahcacares.org>
- National Network of Career Nursing Assistants
<http://www.cna-network.org>
- Nursing Assistant Resources On The Web
<http://nursingassistants.net>
- American Association for Homes and Services for the Aged
<http://www.aahsa.org/>
- American Health Care Association
<http://www.ahcancal.org/>
- National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center
<http://www.ltombudsman.org/>