

PAIN REDUCTION DURING THE HOLIDAYS AND ALL YEAR LONG

Chronic pain is a major issue for nursing home residents. It is estimated that between 45 percent and 80 percent of geriatric nursing home residents experience chronic pain, with most residents experiencing pain daily. Arthritis is a common attributing factor to their pain, which is often chronic in nature. Interestingly, “arthritis” is not a single disease; it is an informal way of referring to joint pain or joint disease and is not well understood. There are more than 100 different [types of arthritis](#) and related conditions, and it is the leading cause of disability.

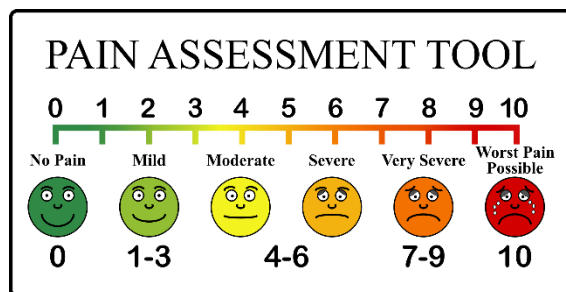
[Call to Action: Promote Management of Pain](#)

Facilitating self-management of arthritis pain and other types of pain is important. Assist residents by implementing the following:

1. Track their symptoms, pain levels, and medications (use at a minimum)
2. Teach them to manage their pain and fatigue
3. Encourage them to be as active as possible and keep moving
4. Teach them to balance activity with rest
5. Provide a healthy diet, which includes foods with anti-inflammatory properties that are rich in antioxidants, and plenty of fluids
6. Promote good sleep habits
7. Involve family members in pain reduction activities

[Important Factors to Consider in Pain Management](#)

Assessment and proper diagnosis of chronic pain is determined by investigating historical and clinical information, along with direct examination. Perception of pain is one of the most important factors to consider. Use of pain scales is helpful in assessing a resident, such as a numerical self-rating scale or the faces of pain rating scale. Keep in mind that not every resident will describe his or her pain in the same manner. It is necessary to individually assess each patient, attempt to ease the discomfort as much as possible and reassess to determine if interventions require modification. Also, there are challenges in using pain scales with residents that have cognitive impairment. It may require behavioral observations, such as facial expressions, verbalizations (such as sighing, moaning or calling out), body movements and physiological manifestations (such as increased heart rate, blood pressure and respirations).



[Nonpharmacologic Management First](#)

Start with nonpharmacologic management of pain to limit the use of medications. Below are a few areas to encourage staff and family members to focus their assistance:

1. Provide reassurance and assist the resident in finding a comfortable position and supportive environment. For example, providing a quiet place with minimal stimulation (avoiding bright lights and loud noises).
2. Ensure the environment is not too hot or too cold



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3. Conduct passive exercises, such as range of motion exercises
4. Use cold packs and/or warm compresses as appropriate to help minimize the resident's pain
5. Encourage relaxation techniques to enhance the resident's mood and provide a sense of well-being
6. Provide massages (teach family members how to effectively massage residents), such as providing back rubs or hand massages)
7. Use music and/or aromatherapy
8. Promote laughter and pleasant conversations to enable a resident to let go of negative feelings and emotions

[Make the Holidays and the New Year Extraordinary](#)

Residents with arthritis are sometimes never pain-free. Let's keep pain experienced by residents at a minimum during the holiday season and set a goal to use as few pain medications as possible. In fact, let's make the year an extraordinary one by vigilantly addressing pain issues!

Qsource, a partner in the atom Alliance, can assist with sharing and identification of best practices for pain management. For more guidance, contact the Qsource Quality Improvement Advisor for Kentucky, Scott Gibson at scott.gibson@area-G.hcqis.org or by phone at 502-680-2669. All our services are free, and we offer many educational tools to assist. **As always, please encourage your residents and staff to protect themselves and obtain tetanus, pneumococcal and influenza vaccines.**

More on atom Alliance

Formed as a partnership between three leading healthcare consultancies, atom Alliance is working under contract to CMS throughout Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee to improve quality and achieve better outcomes in health and healthcare and at lower costs for the patients and communities we serve. Through atom Alliance, AQAF in Alabama, IQH in Mississippi and Qsource in Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee are carrying out an exciting strategic plan, with programs in place to convene, teach and inform healthcare providers, engage and empower patients, and inspire, share knowledge and spread best practices with communities across the entire healthcare continuum. Learn more at www.atomAlliance.org.

Reference links:

1. Managing Chronic Pain in Older Adults: A Long Term Care Perspective; Byrd; December 12, 2013; <https://www.managedhealthcareconnect.com/article/managing-chronic-pain-older-adult-long-term-care>
2. Arthritis Foundation; <http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/where-it-hurts/>
3. Pain management in Long-Term Care Communities: A Quality Improvement Initiative; Reid, et al; February 12, 2015; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4418636/>
4. Pain Assessment in Persons with Cognitive Impairment; Venable, et al; Medscape; April 27, 2015; <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/2113960-overview>
5. Pain Assessment Tool Image: https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=A17TA0B%2F&id=DA50C612E0707B0F8DA791D91EEE56401BFD7522&thid=OIP.A17TA0B_Pjsk3T12nVUiQwEsCZ&mediaurl=https%3A%2F%2Fopenclipart.org%2Fimage%2F2400px%2Fsvg_to_png%2F238112%2FPain-Scale2--Arvin61r58.png&exp=1200&expw=2348&q=pain+free+images&selectedindex=150&ajaxhist=0
6. Nursing Home Resident and Nurse Image: https://www.google.com/search?q=Happy+Nursing+Home+Resident+images&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjbyeme7vbXAhWk7IMKHT_XDKgQ7AkIQg&biw=1920&bih=882#imgrc=eJ-dfy5lhHNO2M: