

Cancer Pain Management Fact Sheet

“There’s no reason to live with pain when we have the ability to control it,” says Carmen R. Green, MD, University of Michigan Medical School professor of anesthesiology. Here are the facts you need to know:

1 Report pain promptly. The longer you wait and the more your pain builds, the harder it can be to treat. So tell your doctor immediately.

2 Be prepared to describe it. Your doctor will prescribe treatment depending on the source of your pain, so the more specific your description, the easier it will be for him to determine the cause. Words to consider: *Sharp, tingling, throbbing, cramping, aching, pressure, burning.*

3 Take your medication as directed. Treatments may include over-the-counter pain relievers and prescription options, including opioids such as codeine, hydrocodone, morphine and oxycodone. During chemo, your doctor may prescribe an antidepressant or an antiepileptic drug to relieve neuropathy, nerve damage brought on by chemo.

Whatever your treatment, be sure to follow directions: Don’t crush pills or cut them in half without your doctor’s direction. Don’t stop taking medication or decrease the amount you’re taking unless your doctor instructs you to do so.

4 Keep steady levels of pain medication in your body, and follow through on any additional therapies your doctor recommends. If you are taking opioids, for example, using a laxative and/or stool softener can help you manage constipation.

