

Let's Talk About...

Pain management techniques for special-needs children

Children with special needs feel pain just as other children do. However, they may not be able to tell you when they are in pain, and it can be hard to tell what is causing their pain. The following suggestions can help you identify your child's pain and help them manage it.

How can I tell if my child is in pain?

Since your child may not be able to tell you they are in pain or even make facial expressions or noises, it's important to watch for problems that may cause pain. To do this, you may:

- Take your child to the doctor regularly to make sure they don't have constipation, urinary infections, feeding issues, muscle spasticity, breathing problems, bone and joint pain, or seizures.
- Check shunts, pumps, trach tubes, G-tubes, or other implants daily to make sure they're working right and aren't infected.
- Look at their skin carefully for pressure sores, rashes, or infections.
- Make sure braces, wheelchairs, car seats, bath chairs, standing frames, and gait trainers fit and work as they should.
- Notice discoloration, swelling, or bruising around the leg and arm bones and ribs (special-needs children can be more prone to injuries).
- Check your child's body carefully right after they fall to make sure there are no injuries.
- Keep a journal of your child's symptoms, including fever, diarrhea, constipation, vomiting, trouble eating, and insomnia, and notice what they were doing when symptoms happened.
- Record all medicine and treatments your child has and notice any symptoms related to them.

Trust your intuition. If you feel something isn't right or you can't manage your child's pain, call their healthcare provider.



What are some ways to help my child manage pain without medicine?

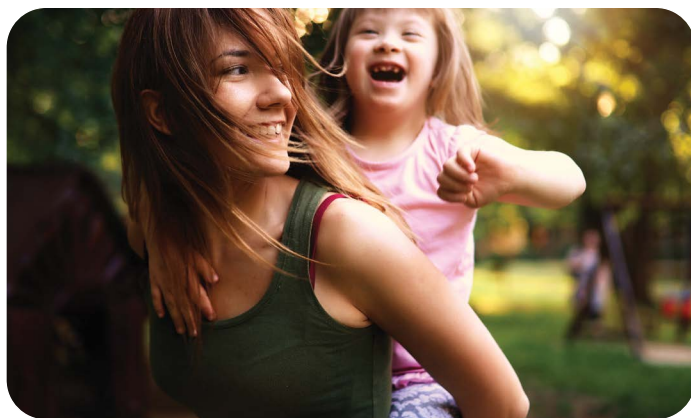
Although your child's healthcare provider may prescribe medicine, the following suggestions can help your child manage their pain as well:

- Liquid timers (toys filled with water and colored liquid that drip down when you flip them over)
- Stress balls
- Textured sensory balls and toys
- Colored modeling clay
- Slime (purchased or homemade)
- Bubbles or bubble machines
- Pinwheels or party blowers (these also help with breathing techniques)

- Meditation and imagery audio exercises
- Finger painting
- Painting with watercolors
- Doodling or coloring
- Sensory bottles (homemade)
- Low lights in their hospital room or at home
- Relaxing music
- Aromatherapy



Talk to a child life specialist for more ideas, especially when you take your child home from the hospital.



How can I be more understanding with my child?

It can be frustrating when you don't know what's causing your child's pain or the best way to treat it. These suggestions can help you be more understanding:

- Be patient with your child and their healthcare providers.
- Remember that it may take longer to find out what's causing your child's pain and treat it, but it isn't impossible.
- Write down helpful and less-helpful treatments (including side effects) so you can help healthcare providers find the best option for your child.

Notes

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