

**NC Department of
Health and Human Services
NC Nurse Aide I Curriculum**

**Module V
Pain
July 2024**

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Objectives

1. Define pain
2. Explain the role of the nurse aide in pain management




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Pain - Definition

- From 1979 pain had always been known as “Anything the patient says it is, occurring whenever the patient says it does”
- In 2020, the International Association for the Study of Pain revised the definition of pain as the “Unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with or resembling that associated with actual or potential tissue damage”



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Pain – Importance

Listening to what the patient subjectively says will lead to more effective evaluation and treatment of pain



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Pain - Facts

- Pain may come with aging, but people do not have to live with it
- Pain is significantly under reported in nursing homes
- Many residents in nursing homes experience pain without reporting
- Nurse aides commonly underestimate pain
- Under rating and under treating pain can be neglect, negligence, or abuse



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Pain - Description

- Aching
- Burning
- Dull
- Radiating
- Sharp
- Shooting
- Stabbing
- Throbbing



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Reactions to Pain

- Religious beliefs and cultural traditions affect pain
- Men and women may report pain differently
- Individuals aged 65 and older show highest rate of opioid-related hospital admissions



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Acute Pain


- Serves a purpose by warning the body of a problem that needs attention
- When people are in acute pain, their discomfort tends to be obvious
- Acute pain symptoms may include:
 - Pale, sweaty skin
 - Increase in pulse, respirations, and blood pressure

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Chronic Pain

- Long-term pain that lasts for six months or more
- Gradual onset that occurs over a period of weeks or months
- Diagnosing the cause can be complicated
- Source of chronic pain may not be obvious



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Common Causes of Geriatric Pain



- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Herniated discs
- Physical therapy
- Wound dressing changes

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Pain – Effects

- Giving up hope
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Withdrawal
- Change in appetite
- Decrease in activities
- Inability to sleep



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Pain – Effects

- Restlessness
- Agitation
- Refusal to participate
- Suicide
- Negative effect on the immune system
- May be at higher risk for injuries, falls, or accidents



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Pain – Use of Medications

- Nurse aide reports complaints of pain to the nurse
- The nurse assesses and medicates if appropriate



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Nurse Aide's Role in Pain Management

- Nurse aides play an important role in pain management
- Nurse aides are most often the first to identify a change in a resident's behavior that may indicate pain



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Asking Residents about Pain

When

- During personal care
- During transfers and ambulation
- Following activities
- After pain management therapies

How

- Ask if they are in pain or uncomfortable
- Ask them to point to the area hurting
- Ask if they remember what they were doing when the pain started




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Screening of Pain Level

- How bad is the pain? Pain scales: use the one available at the facility (examples – 0 -10 Numeric Rating Scale, Wong-Baker Faces Pain Rating Scale)



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- How does a nurse aide determine if a resident is in pain who is nonverbal or has dementia?

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Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role

- Warm or cold packs
- Massage
- Repositioning
- Soothing activities
- Meditation and spiritual support

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Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role

- Supportive listening
- Gentle touch
- Music
- Soft lighting
- Decreased noise



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Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role



- Conversation
- Favorite foods or drinks
- Help with personal cleanliness
- Reminiscing
- Guided imagery
- Deep breathing and relaxation exercises

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Care of the Cognitively Impaired Resident in Pain



- Observe for signs of pain
- Report observations
- When something works, let others know
- Teamwork!

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The End

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