

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

**Module V**  
**Pain**  
July 2019

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**Objectives**

- Define pain
- Explain the role of the nurse aide in pain management



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**Pain - Definition**

**“Anything the patient says it is, occurring whenever the patient says it does.”**



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**Pain - Importance**

Believing what the patient says will lead to more effective evaluations and treatment of pain



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**Pain - Acute Pain**

- Temporary, lasts for a few hours, or, at most, up to six months
- Usually comes on suddenly, as a result of disease, inflammation or injury
- Goes away when the healing process is complete

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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 facilities
- In nursing homes, many experience pain
- Nurse aides commonly underestimate pain
- Under rating and under-treating pain can be neglect, negligence, or abuse
- Nursing homes that do not manage pain properly will be cited

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**Pain - Description**

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



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**Pain – Acute Pain**

- Serves a purpose - warns the body of a problem that needs attention
- Identifying and treating the cause of acute pain is usually possible
- When people are in acute pain, their discomfort tends to be obvious
- Acute pain may cause pale sweaty skin, increase in heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure

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**Reactions to Pain**

- Religious beliefs and cultural traditions affect pain
- Men and women may report pain differently
- Commonly held beliefs about opioids

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### Chronic Pain

- Considered long-term
- Gradual onset – occurs over a period of weeks or months
- Diagnosing cause can be complicated
- Source of chronic pain may not be obvious
- May not have a purpose



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### Common Causes of Pain

- Arthritis
- Cancers
- Ischemic pain
- Neuropathic pain
- Phantom limb pain



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### Pain – Effects (1)

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



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**Pain – Effects (2)**

- 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 nurse
- Nurse assesses and medicates if appropriate



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**Pain – Nurse Aide's Role in Management**

- Nurse Aides play an important role in pain management
- At bedside and often the people most likely to notice when a resident is acting differently or showing signs of pain
- Should take an active role in pain management

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**When to Ask Residents About Pain (1)**

- During personal care
- During transfers and ambulation
- Following activities
- At appropriate times after pain management therapies

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**When to Ask Residents About Pain (2)**

- Are you in pain, uncomfortable, hurting?
- Where is the pain? Ask the resident to point to the area.
- 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)
- Do you remember what you were doing when the pain started?

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**Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role (1)**

- Warm or cold packs
- Massage
- Re-positioning
- Soothing activities
- Prayer and spiritual support

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**Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role (2)**

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

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**Comfort Measures – Nurse Aide’s Role (3)**

- Listening and conversation
- Favorite foods or drinks
- Help with personal cleanliness
- A walk
- Reminiscing

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**Care of the Resident Who is Cognitively Impaired and in Pain**

- Observe for signs of pain
- Report observations
- When something works, let others know
- Works as a team with others

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