



## Tips for Managing Cancer-Related Bone Pain

*Printed and distributed with written permission from Cancer Treatment Centers of America.*

Treatment for cancer-related bone pain depends on many factors. Some treatments help to reduce pain by shrinking the tumor. Others aim to reduce the risk of bone fractures and complications from bone metastases. Because of the complex nature of cancer-related pain, successful pain management usually involves a combination of techniques, such as the following:

- **Clear up misconceptions.** Discussing your pain is not a sign of weakness. You have a right to pain relief and you should insist on it. If you have fears about taking pain medication, talk with your doctor about the differences between addiction, physical dependence, and tolerance. Remember, untreated bone pain can interfere with your ability to battle the disease.
- **Find a pain specialist.** While your oncologists are focused on treating the disease, it helps to have a clinician focused purely on addressing your pain. A pain specialist can help develop a pain management plan that meets your needs. If you are seeing providers in different locations, be sure all members of your health care team are aware of the medications you are taking.
- **Keep your doctor informed.** Only you know where your pain is located, how it feels, how much it hurts, and what makes it better. Let your doctor know right away if you have any new pain, if your pain is getting worse, or if your pain medication is not working. Understanding the details of your pain will help your doctor determine what method of pain control works best for you.
- **Stay on top of your pain.** Pain is best managed and relieved when treated early, rather than waiting until it becomes severe. Take your pain medication as instructed by your doctor, which usually means taking it on a regular schedule even when you are not feeling pain, and not skipping doses. Pain may get worse if you wait, and it may take longer or require larger doses of medication to get relief.
- **Pay attention to side effects.** Pain medication, like all other medications, has its own set of side effects, such as constipation, nausea, dizziness, and drowsiness. Discuss potential side effects with your doctor so you know what to expect, and how you will manage side effects if they occur.
- **Eat a healthy diet and stay hydrated.** A healthy, well-balanced diet is important for bone health. Sufficient calcium and vitamin D can help protect your bones. Protein is important for healing fractures and proper immune system functioning. Increasing your daily intake of fiber and drinking plenty of fluids can help prevent constipation. You may also want to limit sodium, which interferes with calcium retention. A registered dietitian can help develop a meal plan that works for you.
- **Try strength-building exercises.** To strengthen bones and minimize bone loss, try exercising regularly. Under the supervision of your health care team, you may try walking, dancing, and stair climbing, which build bone mass. Swimming may also help to stretch muscles and reduce pain. A rehabilitation therapist can help determine the type and level of physical activity that is safe and appropriate for you.
- **Use assistive devices, if needed.** Assistive devices (e.g., canes, walkers, braces, splints, orthopedic shoes, grab bars, handrails, etc.), may help to reduce the risk of falls, enhance balance, and lessen bone pain. These devices can also promote your independence by making it easier for you to perform everyday activities. Your health care team can recommend appropriate assistive devices for your needs.

*This information is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical guidance.  
Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to making decisions about your medical care.*