

# Pain Management During Childbirth

## Relief of Your Pain is Important to Us!

The health care staff at Riverview Hospital Association are committed to excellence in pain management. In partnership with you, we will work to help you better understand and control your pain. Our goal is to speed your recovery and improve your quality of life.

Pain management is a TEAM effort! You will take an active role in working with your physicians and nurses to manage your pain. The support and help of your family members will often be needed as you continue your recovery at home.

## What is Pain?

Pain is an unpleasant physical and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage. Pain is your body's way of sending a warning to your brain. It is important to know the type or cause of pain so that it can be treated effectively. Pain can be caused by a variety of factors and can be either acute (short-term) or chronic (long-term). Most pain is caused by damage to nerves or tissue in the body. Some conditions that cause pain are:

- burns,
- infections,
- inflammation or swelling (from injury),
- arthritis, and
- joint or muscle problems.

Pain is different for everyone. It can range from a dull ache to sharp, stabbing or shooting sensations. Stress caused by emotional, financial, spiritual and social worries and fears can also increase your pain experience. Unrelieved pain has many negative effects, including sleeplessness, decreased activity level, depression and loss of appetite. Uncontrolled pain can also delay healing.

## Treatment of Pain

Pain can be treated by a variety of methods. You will work with your physicians and nurses to find what works best to treat your pain. There are many different types of medicines used to treat pain. Each of these medications has its unique ability to treat specific types of pain.

## Pain Medication Options During Labor

We realize that not everyone wishes to use pain medication during labor. Whatever your wishes are regarding pain medication, we will support you in your decision.

In addition to relaxation and breathing techniques, other options are available to assist you in staying as comfortable as possible in labor. These include the rocking chair, labor balls, walking and the whirlpool tub.

Even if you are not planning to use pain medication during labor, it is important that you know what is available and when administration is safest for you and your baby. Your physician and nurse will discuss these options with you, including the pros and cons of each and when it is safest for you and your baby to have them.

Of course, the decision to use medications and nonmedication procedures during labor will be a co-decision between you and your physician.

After delivery, your nurse will inform you of the pain medication(s) available and how often they can be administered.

### **Medications:**

It is not uncommon for your physician to prescribe more than one type of medication based on your specific pain. Talk with your physician if you have questions or concerns.

Be sure to tell your health care provider what medicines you have tried for pain and if you are now using any preparations that are not prescribed by your physician, such as herbal products, teas and/or vitamins. Many of these over-the-counter items can interact with other medicines prescribed by your doctor.

### **Side Effects to Pain Medications**

All medicines have some side effects. Each person may experience varying degrees of these side effects. Some examples may include constipation, drowsiness, dizziness, rash, itchiness, nausea, vomiting or slowed breathing. Let your doctor know if you experience any of these. Some of the side effects may be treated and some will disappear with time. Be sure that you understand your medicines and symptoms to report.

### **Communicating about Your Pain**

Learn how to communicate about your pain. We will ask you regularly about your pain; but anytime that you have pain that is not controlled, you must let us know.

At Riverview Hospital Association, we use a “Pain Assessment Scale” to measure your pain level. This 0 to 10 scale (0 = no pain; 10 = the most severe pain) helps you to better explain to your health care provider the pain that your are feeling.

Never assume that your health care providers know you are in pain!

### **Your Pain Care Rights:**

**As a patient with pain, you have the right to:**

- Be believed that you have pain and be taken seriously.
- Receive clear and prompt answers to your questions.

### **Your Pain Care Responsibilities:**

**As a person with pain, you have the responsibility to:**

- Tell the doctor or nurse that you have pain.
- Describe what makes your pain better or worse.
- Cooperate with your physician and other health care providers by following through on their recommendations and by taking prescribed medications as directed.

*Remember, we at Riverview care about YOU and your pain...  
We wish to help control the pain and improve your quality of life.*