

Effective pain assessment

All patients under our care – whether they are in an acute or community hospital - should be assessed for pain throughout their hospital stay to ensure they receive the most appropriate medication and therapy.

Safe and effective pain management not only helps to reduce complications and morbidity, it can reduce length of stay and also prevent hospital readmissions. It's also an essential element of good quality care, improving patient satisfaction.

How do we assess pain?

Using a systematic approach to monitor an individual's pain (as reported by them or their carer) helps in justifying the need for pain relief or not.

Validated pain assessment tools appropriate to the clinical situation should be used including the FLACC assessment alongside verbal and visual analogue scales 0-10.

The FLACC tool is vital in the following patient groups:

- confused/cognitively impaired vulnerable adults and children
- sedated patients
- chronic complex pain situations

This helps the nurse in forming both an objective as well as a subjective pain assessment.

When do we assess pain?

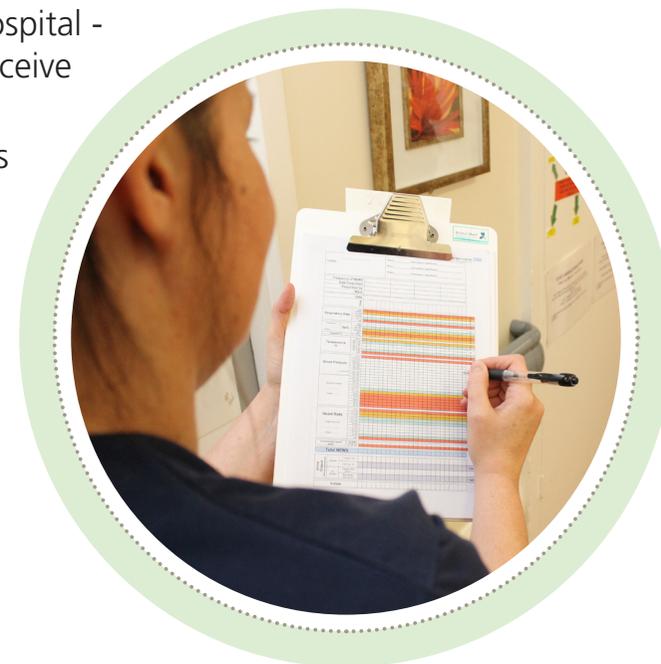
If a patient is experiencing pain and/or requires regular analgesia, a pain assessment should be performed a minimum of every four hours.

It is imperative that nursing staff evaluate the response to medications **30-60 minutes after administration** to evaluate if pain has reduced and also to monitor for any potential serious side effects of increased sedation and/or reduced respiratory rate.

Where do I find pain assessment tools?

Pain assessment is included alongside the monitoring and recording of NEWS on VitalPAC and, where moderate/severe pain is highlighted, provides guidance on managing the situation.

However if a patient needs regular analgesia and/or pain is of concern, this must also be documented on the trust pain assessment chart. The chart assists with monitoring **pre and post analgesia** and also allows for in-depth side effect monitoring on a more regular individual-needs basis. It also ensures both FLACC and VAS scores can be documented and evaluated.



All pain management policies can be found on the intranet under A-Z of services – pain management - <http://stas16/intranet/services-a-z/anaesthesia-and-theatres/pain-management/>

The in-patient pain service is happy to provide ward-based education to support staff in introducing and embedding the use of the FLACC assessment into everyday practice. For further advice or to discuss training needs please contact extension 54862 (JCUH).