

## THE BEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE YOUR PAIN

There are many different pain scales used to measure and communicate pain. It can be important to gather detailed information regarding level of functioning and other factors that assess pain along with pain scales. Some frequently used multidimensional pain assessment tools include the McCaffery Initial Pain Assessment Tool, Brief Pain Inventory, and the McGill Pain Questionnaire. The Patient Comfort Assessment guide and several other pain scales are available in printable form from [www.partnersagainstpain.com](http://www.partnersagainstpain.com). You may also view different scales by visiting [painconsortium.NIH.gov/pain.scales](http://painconsortium.NIH.gov/pain.scales). Due to different pain dimensions addressed and the variability of a large number of assessment tools, meta-analysis has been difficult for certain populations such as those with advanced cancer pain (Holen et al. 2006). It has been suggested that an international standard for pain assessment, with high reliability and validity that is easy to use would make such analysis easier.

Different types of scales include:

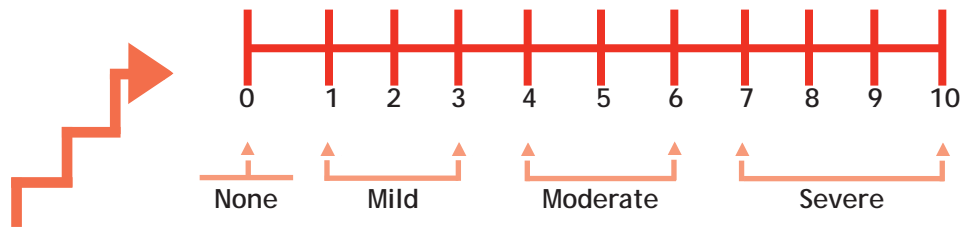
- ◆ Verbal
- ◆ Visual
- ◆ Nonverbal
- ◆ Numerical
- ◆ Specific to adults, children, infants, or the elderly
- ◆ Multidimensional

Two scales, the Numeric Rating Scale and the Wong-Baker Faces Pain Rating Scale, are included on the following pages.

### References/Bibliography

Holen, J., C. Polit, M.J. Hjermstad, J.H. Loge, P.M. Fayers, A. Caraceni, F. DeConno, K. Forbes, C.J. Furst, L. Radbruch, and S. Daasa. "Pain assessment tools: Is the content appropriate for use in Palliative care?" *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*. 32(6):567-580, 2006.

# 0-10 NUMERIC RATING SCALE



## Indications

Adults and children (> 9 years old) in all patient care settings who are able to use numbers to rate the intensity of their pain.

## Instructions

The patient is asked any one of the following questions:

- ◆ What number would you give your pain right now?
- ◆ What number on a 0 to 10 scale would you give your pain when it is the worst that it gets...
- ◆ And when it is the best that it gets?
- ◆ At what number is the pain at an acceptable level for you?

When the explanation suggested in #1 above is not sufficient for the patient, it is sometimes helpful to further explain or conceptualize the Numeric Rating Scale in the following manner:

- ◆ 0 = No pain
- ◆ 1-3 = Mild pain (nagging, annoying, interfering little with ADLs)
- ◆ 4-6 = Moderate pain (interferes significantly with ADLs)
- ◆ 7-10 = Severe pain (disabling; unable to perform ADLs)

The interdisciplinary team in collaboration with the patient/family (if appropriate), can determine appropriate interventions in response to Numeric Pain Ratings.

## Source

McCaffery, M., and A. Beebe, *Pain: Clinical Manual for Nursing Practice*, Baltimore: C.V. Mosby Company, 1993.