Why is it important to treat your pain?
Pain can affect you in many ways. It can keep you from being active, sleeping well, enjoying life, eating and breathing deeply. Pain can also make you feel tired, angry, or depressed. Untreated pain can continue this cycle. The longer pain goes untreated, the harder it is to relieve. Most pain can be relieved. When there is less pain, you will feel more active and interested in doing things you enjoy.

What do I tell my healthcare providers?
In order to help you manage your pain your doctors and nurses need to know:

- Where is your pain?
- When did your pain begin? What caused your pain to begin?
- What does your pain keep you from doing?
- What makes your pain better or worse?
- How much pain are you having? Rate your pain on a scale of 0-10.

How can your pain be treated?
Both medical and non-medical treatments can help to prevent and control pain. You and your doctors and nurses will decide which treatments are right for you. Some people combine two or more treatments to get greater relief.

The doctors and nurses will tell you about the medicines you will be given for your pain. Ask questions if you don’t understand something about your pain medicine. You should know how to take it and what side effects to watch for. Tell your doctors and nurses if you’ve taken pain medicine before and how it helped.

Some other good ways to help relieve pain are massage, hot or cold packs, nerve stimulation (TENS), relaxation, positive thinking, music or other pastimes to distract you. Ask your doctors and nurses if you would like help in trying to relieve your pain with some of these methods.

What are the side effects of pain medicine?
Your doctors and nurses will inform you of the specific side effects of your pain medicines. Not everyone has side effects from pain medicines, but some of the more common side effects a person could experience are:

Sleepiness Some pain medicines cause sleepiness. Let your doctor or nurse know if this is a problem. This is why you avoid doing things that require you to be alert (such as driving), after taking the medicine.
**Constipation** (Not being able to have a bowel movement) Some pain medicines cause constipation. Usually you can help lessen constipation by drinking lots of liquids, eating more fruits and vegetables and exercising. If one or more of these techniques do not work, your doctor may also prescribe a laxative or stool softener to help with constipation. You should call your doctor if you have not had a bowel movement for 3 days.

**Nausea and Vomiting** Some pain medicines cause nausea or vomiting. This will usually improve within 2-3 days after starting pain medicine. Tell your doctor or nurse about your nausea or vomiting. They may be able to give you medicine to improve these side effects.

**Other Side Effects** Some people might also experience dizziness, trouble concentrating, trouble breathing, difficulty in urinating, or rashes. It is important to discuss all side effects with your doctor or nurse. If you have trouble breathing or develop a rash, stop the medicine and promptly call your doctor or nurse.

**Do not let worries like these keep you in pain:**

"I'm afraid of becoming addicted."

**FACT:** Addiction from taking medicine for the relief of pain is RARE. When medicines are taken correctly for pain relief, patients do not become addicted or “hooked”. Some patients only need pain medicines for a time, until the cause of their pain goes away. Some patients will need to take pain medicines for a long time. Taking medicines regularly should not make you feel like an addict.

"If I take too much pain medicine it will stop working."

**FACT:** The pain medicine will not stop working, but sometimes your body will get used to the medicine. This is called tolerance. Tolerance is usually not a problem. If tolerance develops, the amount of medicine can be changed or others can be added. Pain can be relieved, so do not deny yourself pain relief.

"I don't want to seem like a 'complainer'."

**FACT:** Your doctors and nurses understand that the control of pain is an important part of your care. Telling your doctor or nurse about your pain is the first step in getting pain relief. In fact, telling the doctor or nurse about pain is what all patients SHOULD do. It's easier to control pain early, before it becomes severe. Uncontrolled pain can get in the way of your recovery. You have the right to ask for pain relief.

**Who do I call if I have pain after discharge?**

If you have problems with pain after you go home, call:

University Hospital and Clinics at (573) 882-4141 and ask for

(573) 882-2008 Anesthesiology Pain Clinic
(573) 882-8091 Emergency Center

Ellis Fischel Cancer Center at (573) 882-2100 and ask for

(573) 884-3681 Symptom Evaluation Unit
(573) 884-1836 Pain and Palliative Care

_______Home Clinic