

Making sure your child gets the best care for pain in hospital

Many parents worry about the pain and discomfort their child may experience in hospital and with good reason, because children have not always received the standard of care they deserve.

The Healthcare Commission recently found that in Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments:

- Just under half (47%) of children who were in moderate to severe pain due to a broken wrist or elbow were given pain medicine within an hour of arrival
- The quality of children's pain management varied greatly between departments
- Many of the A&Es surveyed did not measure children's pain using a pain scale.

In summer 2004, the Healthcare Commission found that:

- An average of 67% of children had pain while in hospital for day case surgery or for longer stays
- 14 - 30% of children in hospital had pain all or most of the time
- The amount of pain reported varied greatly between hospitals
- Most parents felt the staff had done everything they could (but most parents probably didn't know what to expect).

Did you know that in 2003, the government set standards for the monitoring and treatment of children's pain in hospital?

The standards in the Children's National Service Framework are based on research evidence and are meant to ensure children get the best possible care in hospital. Here is what they say about the of care children's pain...

Children in hospital have a right to:

- Appropriate prevention, assessment and control of their pain
- Expect the management of pain to be a routine part of any treatment or procedure, in any part of the hospital
- Expect to be involved as active partners in pain management
- Have their pain assessed, reviewed and monitored after all procedures.

The standards also say that the hospital staff looking after your child should:

- Receive training in the prevention, assessment and control of children's pain
- Have protocols and procedures to support the safe use of pain medicines
- Perform regular audit of children's pain care
- Have hospital leadership support for co-ordinate activities and resources to ensure that children's pain is recognised and addressed.

What you can do

You can help to make sure your child gets the standard of care promised in the Children's National Service Framework when your child goes to hospital by asking hospital staff:

- How your child's pain will be measured and how often
- How your child will be helped to cope with painful and stressful procedures
- What pain relieving treatments are available

- Sometimes play, psychological or physical treatments work better than pain medicines and have fewer side effects
- Some treatments can be done by your child alone or with your help; some require staff with special skills in pain management
- What you and your child can do to make sure the staff get the best information about your child's pain and how well the treatments are working
- Let the hospital staff know how well your child's pain was treated
 - What worked well
 - What could have been done better.

Want to know more?

www.healthcarecommission.org.uk

www.dh.gov.uk

In Upcoming Issues of When your Child is in Pain

- How you can help your child prepare for and cope with painful medical procedures
- Learning to tell when your baby has pain
- How to care for your child's pain at home after day surgery
- Everyday pain: helping your child learn good coping skills