

Terms

Acute pain: a feeling of physical distress or discomfort that is protective, has an identifiable cause, is of short duration (usually resolving with healing), and involves little tissue damage

Addiction: referring to drug addiction: a dependence phenomenon characterized by impaired control over drug use, compulsive use, continued use despite harm, and craving

Adjuvant analgesia: a drug primarily used to treat something other than pain but also enhances pain relief

Alternative therapies: unconventional treatment approaches used instead of conventional medical care

Analgesia: absence of sensitivity to pain

Analgesic: substance used as a pain reliever; a drug that acts to reduce pain, including over-the-counter drugs such as aspirin as well as those available by prescription only

Analgesic ceiling: the dose of a particular drug beyond which additional amounts of the same drug do not increase the analgesic effect

Breakthrough pain: a flaring of moderate to severe pain despite therapeutic doses of analgesics

Chronic pain: a feeling of physical distress or discomfort that persists over a long period of time and does not always have an identifiable cause

Complimentary therapies: unconventional treatment approaches used in addition to or to enhance conventional medical care

Dermatome: area of skin supplied with afferent nerve fibers from a single posterior spinal root

Efficacy: the ability of a drug to achieve its desired effect

Epidural anesthesia: medication injected via a catheter into the space between the dura mater and the lining of the spinal canal to create a regional nerve block; also called spinal anesthesia

Nociceptor: a peripheral sensory receptor for pain, stimulated by various types of tissue injury

Narcotic: an outdated umbrella term that has been used to refer to opioids, controlled substances, illicit drugs, central nervous system depressants, strong analgesics, and drugs capable of causing physical dependence; opioid is the preferred term for the family of potent pharmacologic analgesics commonly referred to as narcotics

Neuropathic pain: a type of pain usually felt as burning or tingling and resulting from direct stimulation of nerve tissue of the peripheral or central nervous system

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID): any of a group of drugs that reduce pain, fever, and swelling (inflammation), including aspirin.

Opioid: one of a group of analgesics that act on higher centers of the brain and spinal cord to modify perceptions of moderate to severe pain

Terms continued

Pain scale: assessment tool used to rate the severity of pain

Pain threshold: the point at which a person feels pain

Pain tolerance: the level of pain a person is willing to endure

Paresthesia: an abnormal burning, prickling, tingling, or numbing sensation or hypersensitivity most often felt in the extremities and typically associated with neuropathic pain

Patient-controlled analgesia (PCA): a drug delivery system that uses a computerized pump with a button the patient can press to deliver a dose of an analgesic through an intravenous catheter

Physical dependence: an adaptive state characterized by a drug class-specific withdrawal syndrome induced with abrupt cessation, rapid dose reduction, or administration of an antagonist

Placebo: a pharmacologically inert substance, such as a sugar pill or an injection of sterile water, given with the implication of effective treatment

Progressive muscle relaxation: a systematic, stepwise approach to releasing tension in major muscle groups

Somatic pain: generally well-localized pain that results from activation of peripheral pain receptors without injury to the peripheral nerve or central nervous system, such as musculoskeletal pain

spinal anesthesia: medication injected via a catheter into the space between the dura mater and the lining of the spinal canal to create a regional nerve block; also called epidural anesthesia

Titration: the process of gradually adjusting the dose of a medication until the desired effect is achieved

Tolerance: an adaptive state characterized by a decreasing response to repeated constant doses of a drug or the need for increasing doses to maintain a constant response

transmission: spreading of the pain "message" across the various nerve fibers linking the pain impulse to the brain

Visceral pain: pain that results from activating the pain receptors of organs in the thoracic, pelvic, or abdominal cavities and is felt as a generalized aching or cramping sensation sometimes referred to the surface of the body

Visual analog scale: a straight line with the left end of the line representing no pain and the right end of the line representing the worst pain, with patients marking the place on the line where they think their pain falls

Wong-Baker FACES scale: a pain assessment tool that asks patients (often children) to select one of several faces indicating expressions that convey a range from no pain through the worst pain