



# Helping you *feel better*

Some people may live through an illness without pain or other common symptoms such as shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, confusion (delirium), constipation, or anxiety. If you have symptoms, make sure you get help to relieve them.

## Things to know

- Your healthcare team needs to know about your symptoms so they can help you feel as well as possible. Your illness may not be curable, but you can still expect your symptoms to be controlled.
- Your doctor and nurses can help you sort out the best way to relieve your symptoms. This may include medications, complementary approaches and traditional medicines.
- Pain medications (also known as ‘opioid’ medications such as morphine) may help relieve pain or shortness of breath during a serious illness.
- Opioids prescribed in the right dose do not cause addiction or make you die sooner.

*“People don’t want to suffer. They don’t want their families to see them suffer.”*

**Dr. Amy Montour**  
Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario

## Here are some other ways to relieve symptoms

Pain	Applying warm or cold compresses. Repositioning the person. Gentle massage or movement. A distraction such as thinking or talking about other things.
Shortness of breath	Air movement from a fan or open window. Sitting up or raising head of bed.
Nausea and vomiting	Small snacks rather than big meals. Respecting food preferences. Avoiding spicy or heavy foods. Preventing constipation.
Confusion	A calm environment with familiar things and people.
Constipation	Regular laxatives. Increased fluids. Movement. Privacy and sitting up for bowel movements.
Anxiety	Relaxation/visualization exercises. Talking to others. Asking questions.

For more information go to [VirtualHospice.ca](http://VirtualHospice.ca)

## Things to do

- Report symptoms to your health care providers, and advocate for help with symptom management.
- Keep written notes about your symptom(s). This is called a symptom diary. For example, if you have pain, record the date, time of day, how long it lasts, where it is located, whether it has spread to another area of your body, how it feels (e.g. sharp, achy, throbbing, burning, tingling), what makes it feel better or worse, and how severe it is on a scale of 0 to 10. If you are taking medications or other traditional medicines, write down what and how much you take, whether it is effective or not, and the severity of the symptom one hour after you take medication.

### Example of symptom scale:



NO SYMPTOM

WORST POSSIBLE SYMPTOM

- Talk to your doctor or nurses about your symptom(s). Show them your symptom diary, any medications you are taking or anything else you have tried. Ask for their help.

## Helpful resource

[www.VirtualHospice.ca/SymptomDiary](http://www.VirtualHospice.ca/SymptomDiary)

*“Palliative care is not going to make you better, but it’s going to make you feel better.”*

### Debbie, Nurse

Waycobah First Nation, Nova Scotia

*“Our palliative care goal is that we provide you comfort measures from the minute you’re diagnosed.”*

### Verna, Nurse

Six Nations of the Grand River, Ontario



TURTLE MEDICINE WHEEL BY KAREN BISSON

To see the Indigenous Voices video series and to learn more about living with serious illness and grief, go to [LivingMyCulture.ca](http://LivingMyCulture.ca)

### Also available:

- What is palliative care?
- Compassionate caring
- Care at home and away
- Helping you feel better
- What to expect
- Honouring wishes
- Making memories
- Grief and letting go

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