

Facts about pain management

It is estimated that in the United States more than 76 million people suffer from pain. Pain can be chronic or acute, such as post-surgical pain.

Pain management standards

On January 1, 2001, pain management standards went into effect for Joint Commission accredited ambulatory care facilities, behavioral health care organizations, critical access hospitals, home care providers, hospitals, office-based surgery practices, and long term care providers. The pain management standards address the assessment and management of pain. The standards require organizations to:

- recognize the right of patients to appropriate assessment and management of pain
- screen patients for pain during their initial assessment and, when clinically required, during ongoing, periodic re-assessments
- educate patients suffering from pain and their families about pain management

The pain management standards require that patients be asked about pain, depending on the service the organization is providing. There are some services that do not require a pain assessment; for example, if a patient is being X-rayed. However, if a patient is experiencing pain, appropriate care should be made available. The organization's response to a patient's pain is based on the services it provides. If screening indicates that pain exists, the organization may assess and treat the pain; assess the pain and refer the patient for treatment; or refer the patient for further assessment. Patients are encouraged to report pain and to cooperate with the prescribed treatment.

The pain management standards were developed in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin – Madison Medical School and was part of a project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Joint Commission worked with a panel of pain experts to develop the standards addressing pain management. Health care professionals, professional groups and associations, including the American Pain Society, consumer groups and purchasers were involved in the development of the standards.

For most accreditation programs, the pain management standards appear in the Provision of Care, Treatment and Services (PC) and the Rights and Responsibilities of the Individual (RI) chapters of The Joint Commission's accreditation manuals. For the behavioral health care program, the pain management standards appear in the Care, Treatment and Services (CTS) chapter. The Joint Commission standards are **not** available on The Joint Commission website. The standards manuals and E-dition (electronic manual) can be purchased from Joint Commission Resources (JCR) by calling JCR Customer Service at (877) 223-6866.

Other pain management resources

- [Speak Up: What you should know about pain management](http://www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx) is a patient education brochure that provides questions and answers to help patients talk with their doctor, nurse and other caregivers about how to treat their pain. Free downloadable files of all Speak Up brochures (including Spanish language versions) are available on The Joint Commission website at <http://www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx>.
- Joint Commission Resources (JCR), a not-for-profit subsidiary of The Joint Commission, offers a number of resources on pain management. For more information, visit JCR's website, www.jcrinc.com, or request a catalog from the JCR Customer Service at (877) 223-6866.