

If you live with pain, there is a good chance you have been asked many times to rate your pain on a scale from 1-10. But what do those numbers mean? The guide below is intended to help you identify your level of pain to discuss with your doctor.

1

VERY MILD

Pain is very mild, like a mosquito bite or poison ivy itch. Most of the time, you never think about the pain.

2

DISCOMFORTING

Minor pain, like lightly pinching the fold of skin between the thumb and first finger.

3

TOLERABLE

Pain is noticeable and distracting like an accidental cut or a blow to the nose. However, you are able to adapt to the pain and 'get used to it.'

4

DISTRESSING

Moderate pain like a toothache or stubbing your toe. You notice the pain all the time and cannot completely adapt.

5

VERY DISTRESSING

Moderately strong pain, such as a sprained ankle or mild back pain. Not only do you notice the pain constantly, you are now also preoccupied trying to manage it that your normal lifestyle is curtailed.

6

INTENSE

Strong, deep, piercing pain that seem to partially dominate your senses causing you to think unclearly. You may begin having trouble holding a job or maintaining normal social relationships.

7

VERY INTENSE

Severe pain that completely dominates your senses. At this point, you are effectively disabled and frequently cannot live alone.

8

UTTERLY HORRIBLE

Pain so intense you can no longer think clearly at all, causing severe personality changes. Comparable to childbirth or migraine headache.

9

EXCRUCIATING, UNBEARABLE

Pain so intense you cannot tolerate it, and demand pain medication or surgery with no regard of the side effects or risk. You are unable to converse, and may be crying uncontrollably.

10

UNIMAGINABLE, UNSPEAKABLE

Unspeakable pain. Most people will never experience this level of pain. Comparable to crushing a hand and losing consciousness as a result of the pain, and not the blood loss.

QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE

A measure of function for people living with pain

- 1 Homebound and in bed all day. Unable to perform basic tasks or functions. Little ability to communicate or concentrate. Difficulty maintaining relationships. Extremely depressed. May feel suicidal.
- 2 Homebound. Spends majority of day in bed. Barely able to complete small household tasks. Very depressed and feeling hopeless.
- 3 Able to leave house on occasion, but with great difficulty. Manages some activities at home, like light cleaning or food preparation, but only on good days. Can maintain some relationships, but usually only in touch over the phone or email.
- 4 Leaves house once a week. Performs most of basic home responsibilities, but with great difficulty. Still cannot work or volunteer. Can engage minimally in light hobbies and occasional social interactions. Depressed, but managing.
- 5 Able to leave home a few days a week, but only when required, e.g. for health appointments. May work or volunteer a few hours a week. Can manage all household responsibilities, although with modifications and rest. May feel alone and angry at times.
- 6 Can work and/or volunteer about five hours a week, and attend some social activities throughout the month. Engages in some hobbies. Some persistent feelings of isolation and frustration.
- 7 Able to work and/or volunteer five to 15 hours a week. Have ability for some involvement in hobbies and social interactions. Maintains most relationships. Sporadically feels deeply upset about situation, but mostly positive.
- 8 Energy and strength to work/volunteer part-time while also having stamina to attend evening functions during the week. Active on weekends. Feels that pain is challenging, but not impossible to manage. Maintains close relationships fairly easily.
- 9 Able to function eight hours daily, participate in family life, and plan most outside social activities. Works full-time or nearly full-time, but with careful rest and modifications. Engages in almost all hobbies and social activities.
- 10 Able to work or volunteer full-time without issue. Can get around with no problem and participate in social gatherings and hobbies with ease. Active in community. Takes full part in family life.

WANT MORE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TOOLS TO HELP YOU ON YOUR PAIN JOURNEY? VISIT: [USPAINFOUNDATION.ORG](https://www.uspainfoundation.org)