



Title : Pain included in vital sign checks at Singapore General Hospital

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SINGAPORE : The Singapore General Hospital is now making pain a vital sign that has to be monitored during medical check-ups.

Simply by pointing at a pain ruler, patients can now indicate the level of pain they are experiencing.

Usually, four vital signs - pulse, blood pressure, temperature and respiration rate - are checked during medical checkups.

Pain is now being included as the fifth vital sign.

But it does not mean that stronger pain killers will be prescribed if the readings are high.

Dr Felicia Tan, Medical Officer, Singapore General Hospital, said: "The first thing that we do is to see what is the cause of the pain before we administer any medication and to see whether there is any other organic problems that we can rule out before treating the pain alone."

Pain is not just in the mind, it can affect a patient's blood pressure and heart rate or may even lead to a chronic condition, if left untreated.

By including pain as the fifth vital sign, pain can then be managed and monitored more effectively.

Dr Yeo Sow Nam, Pain Management Specialist, SGH, said: "It's important because quite often we found that if you do not recognise it up front, patients do not necessarily report pain as an issue to us. A lot of times there is a lot of under-reporting therefore leading on to under-treatment. And under-treatment can have its implication."

Patients like Mdm Boey Chee Choy give the pain ruler the thumbs up.

She said: "I feel that this way is better. I can tell the doctor where the pain is, the doctor then can know how much pain I have."

Other SingHealth hospitals are expected to introduce this method of assessment soon. - CNA