

Breakthrough pain

Breakthrough cancer pain (BTCP) is an escalation of pain in a patient with chronic, stable pain. The term is mainly used for patients with oncological diseases. It occurs in 40-70% of them. The etiology is combined, but breakthrough pain often occurs during an acute worsening of the underlying disease.

Clinical picture

It is a very **intense pain** that starts **suddenly**. The differential diagnosis distinguishes it from pain that occurs after the end of the analgesic effect before the next planned dose (so-called *end of dose pain*). At the same time, it is not an insufficiently alleviated pain that the patient feels most of the day.

Therapy

Treatment consists of so-called **rescue medication** (rescue drugs) that quickly relieve pain and subsequent adjustment of the treatment plan intending to **prevent** further episodes of breakthrough pain.

Rescue medications include, for example:

- sublingual tablets with fentanyl;
- fentanyl for intranasal use;
- application of morphine (preferably IV or PO in the form of tablets or drops)

It is also used in **combination** with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, metamizole, or coanalgesics such as gabapentin and pregabalin.

When pharmacotherapy is exhausted, **invasive procedures** come next. Using catheter **techniques**, local anesthetics and opioids are applied to the epidural space or peripheral nerves in effective doses. For well-cooperative patients, so-called **patient-controlled analgesia** can be used, in which the patient can increase the dose as needed (the upper limit of boluses is set). The disadvantages of invasive procedures are the need for interdisciplinary cooperation with an anesthesiologist, in most cases hospitalization and complications associated with the inserted catheter.



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Links

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References

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