

# Appendix 3: Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS)

## Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS)

Some older adults, whether or not cognitively impaired, may have difficulty responding to an NRS. For residents who prefer, and who have relatively good retention of verbal communication, a Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS) may be more useful than an NRS.

Various types of VDS have been validated. They ask people to respond to brief descriptions of levels of pain intensity such as: no pain, mild pain, moderate pain, severe pain, extreme pain and the most intense pain imaginable. Residents whose communication is adversely affected by linguistic or cultural backgrounds or limited education may still be able to respond to a VDS. A simple six-category VDS is shown below.<sup>1</sup>

### Six-category Verbal Descriptor Scale (VDS)



**No  
Pain**

**Mild  
Pain**

**Moderate  
Pain**

**Severe  
Pain**

**Very  
Severe  
Pain**

**Worst  
Possible  
Pain**

1. The Australian Pain Society Pain in Residential Aged Care Facilities: Management Strategies, 2nd Edition 2018 Chapter 2 page 30