

Relieving Pain is a Team Effort

Tips when taking narcotic pain medications:

Narcotic pain medicines are serious and potentially dangerous drugs. They usually help with pain from surgery or fractured bones but you want to be careful and understand all of the risks and benefits before you take them. Read the instructions carefully.

Here are three things you need to be aware of:

- 1) **Narcotic pain medicines mask pain, they do not treat the cause.**
Narcotic pain medicines work by blocking how your body temporarily reacts to pain. It does not treat the cause of your pain. This is important to understand. If you have an injury, by masking the pain with pain medicines you may not be giving your injury the rest it needs. If you had a surgery, the pain is usually the worst during the first couple of days.

- 2) **Narcotic pain medicines have lots of side effects, the most common of which is constipation.**
It is a good idea to **drink lots of fluids** while on narcotic pain medicine and always take them with food to help prevent nausea. Also consider taking an over the counter **stool softener**. A good one to consider using is docusate sodium (also called Colace). It comes in 100mg capsules and you can take up to 3 per day. Be sure to read the instructions and be aware of the many other side effects in case you experience them. If you experience itching, take Benedryl 50mg, you can get it over the counter. If you have any other side effects, stop taking the medicine and call our office.



- 3) **The longer you take them, the less well they work. They can be addicting.**
Narcotic pain medicine can be addicting. Plan on weaning yourself off of the medicine as soon as you are able. The longer you take them, the more tolerant you become to their effects and the less well they will work.

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Doing your part:

We want to insure that our patients to have adequate pain relief. For this reason, we do prescribe narcotic pain medications in the postoperative period. However, out of respect for the protection of our patients and their families we have developed standard pain management protocols. Our office policies restrict our staff from deviating from these protocols. The narcotic limits set to avoid abuse potential are liberal enough that nearly all of our patients find that they require less amounts of the pain medications than we have granted them access to. In fact, many patients find that they require no narcotics whatsoever. If you are on strong pain medication prior to surgery it is much more difficult to control your discomfort after surgery. If this is the case, we may refer you to pain management or have your primary care provider dispense all pain medications.

What YOU Can Do to Help Your Pain?

- Elevate the extremity to decrease swelling and discomfort.
- Ice the extremity several times a day.
- Participate in daily exercises if able; at least try moving surrounding joints multiple times daily to avoid stiffness and discomfort.
- Try relaxation and distraction techniques to calm anxiety.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude.

Narcotic pain medicine facts:

- The United States consumes 99 percent of the world's narcotic pain medicine and this continues to increase. No compelling reasons exist for this significant volume increase.
- Overdose is now the #1 cause of death in the US in young adults age 25-45. Most pain medication abusers don't get the pills from dealers, but from friends, relatives, and physicians.
- Pain medications are best used when integrated with other pain management modalities such as physical therapy, exercise, and healthy lifestyle habits. Attempting to have multiple physicians unbeknownst to each other prescribe pain medication is dangerous and illegal.

Reference: Sohn D. Pain Meds Present Problems. AAOS Now. Jul 2013