

# Pain Management after Surgery, Injury or Illness

## What should I expect if I have pain?

- Some pain may be normal.
- It is important to know that it may not be possible to completely eliminate your pain.
- Our goal is to help you to manage your pain so that you can get back to your normal routine as soon as possible.
- We will work together to create a plan to manage your pain and track the progress of the plan.
- If you have questions about your care, please tell your nurse or provider.

## How is my pain measured?

- Your pain will be measured on a scale of 0 to 10.
- The pain rating scale will help you to score your pain based on your ability to function with that pain.
- For example, a score of:
  - 0 = No pain
  - 5 = Pain interrupts some activities
  - 10 = Pain is as bad as it can be, nothing else matters
- Remember, some pain is expected following illness, injury or surgery.

## How will my pain be treated?

- You may be offered medication to treat your pain.
- You can also use non-medicine treatments to help manage your pain.
- If you have severe, uncontrolled pain, you may be prescribed narcotics, also known as opioids.
- You have the right to learn about your options and work with your care team to find the best treatment to manage your pain.

## Non-Opioid Medicines

- Many effective medicines do not need a prescription. Examples include:
  - Acetaminophen, which you may know as Tylenol®
  - Ibuprofen, which you may know as Advil® or Motrin®
  - Aspirin
- Other low risk medicines require a prescription and are helpful for treating pain. Examples include:
  - Celecoxib, which you may know as Celebrex®

## Alternative Therapies

- Alternative therapies can be very helpful in managing pain. You can try:
  - Ice or heat packs as recommended by your care team.
  - Massage, relaxation techniques or meditation.
  - Changing positions in bed.
  - Watching TV or listening to music.

## Opioids, also known as Narcotics

- Opioids should only be used to treat severe pain that cannot be controlled by other methods.
- Opioids have been shown to increase your risk of complications.
- Opioids are highly addictive.
- Opioids should only be used in the lowest effective dose, for a limited amount of time.
- Opioids require a prescription. Some examples include:
  - Tramadol, known as Ultram®.
  - Hydrocodone with acetaminophen, known as Lortab®, Vicodin®, Norco®.
  - Oxycodone with acetaminophen, known as Percocet®, or Roxicet®.
  - Oxycodone, known as OxyContin®.
  - Morphine, known as MS Contin®.

## What will happen after I go home from the hospital?

- Your care team will discuss your ongoing care plan with you before you leave.
- You will be given detailed instructions for any medicine and follow up care.
- You may be given a prescription for medicines to take when you go home.
- Be sure to tell your care team if you have concerns about caring for yourself at home. Common concerns may include stairs, or living alone.

## How should I manage pain when I go home?

- Always use non-opioid and non-medicine options first.
- Take non-opioid medicine regularly, as instructed by your care team.
- Avoid doing things that make your pain worse like heavy lifting or straining.
- Use opioids only to treat severe pain that is not controlled by other methods.
  - Always follow the instructions of your care team.
  - Always take the lowest effective dose.
  - Do not take more than prescribed.
  - Do not mix with sleeping pills or alcohol.
  - Stop taking opioids when the pain can be managed by other methods listed above.
- You may also be referred to a pain specialist when needed.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

### Side effects of Opiates may include:

- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Constipation
- Decreased breathing
- Addiction
- Overdose
- Death

### Opiate dependency and addiction risk:

- The risk of dependency increases after 3 days of continuous use.
- There are many local resources to help with dependency issues.
- Opiate dependency can develop easily. Don't feel ashamed.
- Speak to your care team if you have concerns.

### General medicine safety:

- Keep all medicines in a safe place, out of sight so they cannot be taken by someone else.
- Keep out of reach of children.
- Never mix opioids with sleeping pills, over the counter sleep aids or alcohol.
- Do not drive while taking opioids.
- Be careful at home when cooking, bathing, showering or using stairs. You may be more likely to hurt yourself or fall.
- For anyone taking opioids, watch for excessive sleepiness or decreased breathing as a sign of overdose. Try to arouse the person if you are concerned. Call 911 if you are unable to awaken them OR if their breathing is shallow, slow, or irregular.

### Proper medicine disposal:

- Empty liquid medicine from containers, open capsules or crush tablets and mix with kitty litter, dirt or old coffee grounds. Place the mixture into a sealed bag or container and throw it in the trash.
- Take medicines to a local drug takeback center, for a list visit:  
<https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e1s2>
- Use a home drug disposal pouch.
- Contact your local pharmacy for help.

