

Opioid Medication Information

Understanding Pain

Pain is an expected normal part of healing and recovery from many musculoskeletal diseases, injuries and surgery. Some pain will be present even with appropriate pain treatments including use of opioid medications. Pain naturally subsides during healing and recovery - usually lasting only for several days and rarely more than 2 to 3 weeks. Pain can be effectively treated in several ways other than using opioid medications. As a result, many patients require little or no opioid medications and those that use opioid medication take them for a short period of time.

Opioid/Controlled Substance/Narcotic Medication

Safety Facts

1. Opioid prescription medications (Opioids or Controlled-Substance Narcotic medications) are the most frequently prescribed medications for moderate to severe acute pain from many musculoskeletal diseases, injuries or surgery.
2. Opioids should be used ONLY as prescribed by your IBJI physician and staff.
3. ALL opioids are potentially harmful and addictive.
4. You should ALWAYS use the lowest dose of opioid medications that is effective for you and ALWAYS use the opioid medication for the shortest period of time needed to reduce the pain you are experiencing (usually a few days).
5. ALL opioids should NOT be taken with Alcohol, other narcotic medications, muscle relaxants, sedatives, tranquilizers, or MAO inhibitor medications – can cause confusion, drowsiness, slow or stop breathing leading to respiratory death.
6. You should NOT drive or perform dangerous activities when taking opioid medications.
7. Opioids should not be taken during pregnancy and can harm your unborn baby.
8. Never take more opioid pills than prescribed by your physician.
9. An overdose of opioid medications can cause confusion, drowsiness, slow or stop breathing causing death. If you or a family member is concerned about an opioid overdose – call 911 immediately.
10. ALL opioid medication refills must be requested during daytime IBJI office hours.
11. OrthoAccess and Walk-in clinics will not prescribe opioid medications.
12. Contact your IBJI office if you have increasing pain unresponsive to treatment

Common Opioid Side Effects

Many (most) patients have some annoying and unpleasant side effects from opioid medications - even when taking the opioids properly. The most common unpleasant side effects include:

- **Skin itching and rash**
- **Nausea and vomiting**
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Constipation**
- **Drowsiness and dizziness**
- **Headache**
- **Forgetfulness or loss of concentration**

Some patients have several of these side-effects at the same time. These side effects are not a true allergy or usually not dangerous - but unpleasant and annoying. The best treatment is stopping the opioid medication and using other types of pain treatment.

IBJI Opioid Medication Refill Policy

Because opioids are dangerous, ALL refills for opioid medications can only be done by calling your physician's office during the day, when your doctor's office is open and your chart is available. No opioid medication refills can be filled on weekends or in evenings hours when the IBJI office is closed – so anticipate a refill if needed and call your doctor's office early in the morning during the week to make sure your refill is available.

Non-Opioid Ways to Reduce Pain

Mild pain from many musculoskeletal diseases, injuries and even surgery usually does not require opioid medications. For more moderate to severe pain, combining non-opioid pain treatment with opioid medications can more effectively reduce pain and reduce the dosage and/or duration of opioid medications required. Several effective non-opioid pain treatments are listed below.

1. R.I.C.E.

- a. **Rest** – avoid strenuous or continuous activity as you recover and heal
- b. **Ice** – put ice or cold on the injury or wound area over a soft clean towel – 10 minutes on - 10 minutes off. **DO NOT** apply ice directly to your skin – place a towel between the ice and your skin
- c. **Compression** – place a light compressive wrap for the area of injury or wound
- d. **Elevation** – elevate the area of injury or wound, if you can, above the level of your heart

2. Light Activity

Maintain some light activity, such as walking short distances, if your doctors instructions permit, several times a day during your recovery to reduce pain and prevent muscle weakness

3. Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is an over the counter medication that helps reduce pain. Many opioid prescription pills also contain acetaminophen, so do not take over the counter acetaminophen in combination with prescription opioids unless directed by your physician

4. Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Medications (NSAID's)

There are several Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Medications (NSAID's) available over the counter that reduce pain and swelling - such as generic aspirin, Ecotrin (coated aspirin), generic Ibuprofen, Advil, Nuperin, generic Naprosyn and Aleve. These over the counter NSAID medications can be taken alone or in combination with acetaminophen to reduce pain and swelling. There are also several prescription NSAID's – such as Celebrex and Toradol, that can be prescribed alone or in combination with opioids to reduce pain and swelling

Reducing Risks and Dangers of Opioid Medications

All opioid medications are potentially harmful, dangerous and addictive. To reduce your risk of harm, use of all opioid prescription medications as follows:

- **Use the lowest opioid dose needed to help the pain**
- **Take opioid medications for the shortest period of time needed - usually only for a few days - rarely more than a couple weeks**
- **Use the least strong opioid medication to help reduce your pain**
- **Never take higher doses or take opioids more frequently than prescribed by your IJJI doctor and staff**

All opioids are addictive or habit-forming medications. It can be difficult to stop taking opioid medications even after use for short periods of time (weeks). For some patients, opioid medications are more habit-forming or addictive. If you have any and particularly several of these of the following opioid addiction risk factors, you should talk with your physician and take opioid medications very cautiously.

- **A family has been addicted to opioids or controlled-substance medications**
- **You have previously abused or been addicted to alcohol, pain medications or illegal drugs**
- **You have been sexually abused**
- **You are a young male (less than 45 years of age)**
- **You have a mood-change or behavioral psychological disease - such as ADD, OCD, Bipolar or Depression**

For more information about opioid medications on line go to:

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/perspectives/perspective/215/patient-safety-and-opioid-medications>