

# Opioids After Surgery or Trauma: A conversation guide

The information in this handout will help you know what to expect after your surgery, the goal of managing your pain after surgery or trauma, and the side effects of the pain medicines prescribed.

## What should I expect after a surgery or trauma?

Almost all surgeries or traumas result in some level of pain. Your pain will likely be worse in the first 24 hours (1 day) after your surgery or injury and get better over the next few days.

It's important to your healthcare providers that your pain be well-managed. However, you should know that your pain medicines are not likely to take away all of your pain.

Opioid pain pills are often given to patients to help control their pain. It's important to note that while these medicines are effective for the treatment of acute (short-term) pain, using them for longer periods of time can be harmful to your health. There are many other safe and effective ways to manage your pain.

While taking opioids, it is important that you take the minimum dose prescribed and follow your provider's instructions. As soon as your pain allows, follow your providers instructions for stopping your opioids. Stopping abruptly can cause symptoms of withdrawal.

Your provider may also tell you to take non-opioid pain relievers such as Tylenol or anti-inflammatory medicines, such as Advil, Motrin, Aleve, or others, along with your opioid prescription.



### Opioid medicines: Facts you need to know

Opioids are powerful pain relievers, but come with some risks. Be aware that:

- You can become dependent on opioids in a very short time, even if you're taking them exactly as ordered by your doctor. (Dependence is when you get withdrawal symptoms after you stop taking them.)
- In 2019:
  - -1.6 million people had a diagnosis of opioid use disorder.
  - -70,630 people died from a drug overdose.
  - –10.1 million people misused prescription opioids.
- In 2020, roughly 3 out of 4 of drug overdose deaths involved an opioid.

#### What are the risks and side effects?

The most common adverse reactions to opioids include:

- · Decreased (slow) breathing
- Constipation
- Sleepiness
- · Limited ability to fight infection
- Itching
- · Hormonal imbalance
- · Interactions with other drugs
- Death

#### Potential risk factors for opioid abuse

The likelihood of misusing opioids is higher if you:

- Are age 18 to 34
- · Are male
- · Are refilling prescriptions early
- Have 4 or more prescriptions, or prescriptions from 2 or more pharmacies or doctors.

The information in this fact sheet is adapted from the Narcotic Fact Sheet for Patients written by The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute.

#### Symptoms of withdrawal

Early symptoms of withdrawal include:

- Agitation
- Anxiety
- Muscle aches (other than at the surgical site)
- Insomnia (not sleeping)
- Sweating

Late symptoms of withdrawal include:

- · Abdominal (belly) cramps
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Intermountain Health complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。

© 2019–2024 Intermountain Health. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. FS433b - 03/24 (Last reviewed - 03/24) Also available in Spanish.