

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.

The most common adverse reactions to opioids include:

- ## Potential risk factors for opioid abuse

- 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.

Early symptoms of withdrawal include:

- Late symptoms of withdrawal include:**

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

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