

Prescription Opioid Pain Medication



We are working to fight the opioid (a.k.a. narcotics or prescription pain-killers) epidemic facing our nation. Narcotic pain medications are necessary in some cases to control severe pain. However, we want to promote safe use of narcotic pain medicine and minimize risky narcotic use. Here are some facts about prescription pain medications:

- It is unusual to become addicted to prescription pain-killers if they are taken for short periods of time (a few days), according to the prescription instructions, for the problem they are prescribed, by the person for whom they are prescribed.
- Narcotics are seldom prescribed for post-surgical pain in other countries. In one study, patients having broken ankle surgery from the U.S. and Holland were compared. The patients in the U.S. took narcotics after surgery and the patients in Holland took ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Both groups reported the same amount of pain after surgery.
- A patient who uses prescription opioids for more than 10 days is at increased risk for long-term use.
- One study of people in treatment for opioid addiction showed that 41% of them said their addiction started with an opioid prescription written for them and 32% of them said their addiction started with a prescription written for a family member or friend.⁴
- Young people are most at risk for prescription drug abuse. In the past year, 11.4% of people age 12-25 used prescription drugs for recreational purposes at least once. After marijuana, prescription drugs are the most commonly abused drugs among high school seniors.
- Overdose deaths involving prescription opioids have quadrupled since 1999¹. Every day, 44 people in the U.S. die from prescription opioid overdose.² Among people age 25-65, drug overdose caused more deaths than motor vehicle crashes.³

We *highly recommend* that you dispose of any leftover narcotic pain pills as soon as you no longer need them. Some nearby safe disposal options are:

1. **The Southdale branch of the Hennepin County Library** - 7001 York Avenue, Edina, MN 55435
2. **The Hennepin County District Court Ridgedale** - 12601 Ridgedale Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55305
3. **The Golden Valley Police Department** - 7800 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55427
4. **The Minneapolis Police Department 1st precinct** - 19 North 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401

More safe medication drop sites can be found on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/medication-disposal-toolkit>. Then click on "Other Minnesota examples"

References

1. Rudd RA, Seth P, David F, Scholl L. Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths-United States, 2010-2015. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 16 December 2016. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mm24.mm6550e1>
2. <http://CDC.gov>
3. HHS.gov/abouttheepidemic
4. Canfield MC, Keller CE, et al. Prescription Opioid Use among Patients Seeking Treatment of Opioid Dependence. J Addict Med. 2010 Jun; 4(2):108-113.



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recoverwell

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understanding pain

Why we feel pain

Pain is part of your body's alarm system and is a normal response after sustaining trauma from surgery or injury. Pain usually decreases within days of a surgery/injury and goes away once tissue has healed. While pain can interfere with everyday life and affect eating and sleeping, it can also have positive results. By thinking about ways to reduce your pain you begin taking charge of pain and take a more active role in your recovery. You learn self-management techniques that can be used in the future when pain presents itself.

How pain messages travel

Pain is an electrical impulse, or "message," that travels through nerves connecting the tissues of the body to the brain via the spinal cord. Different types of nerves carry different messages. Some nerves carry information about heat and cold, touch, pressure, vibration, where your body is in space, and other nerves carry pain signals.

If a pain message is played over-and-over, it's as if there is a well worn path in the woods that is easy to find. That's one of the reasons why pain seems worse at night. Our bodies are idle and quiet and don't have as much information from other types of nerves traveling to our brain, so the pain message has a wide-open, easy pathway.

How the brain perceives pain

Once a pain message is received, the brain sorts the information through three different areas to process the message:

- Physical sensation – this part of the brain identifies the message as pain. For example you might feel burning, shooting, throbbing, or aching sensations.
- Emotional feeling – this part of the brain tells you how to feel about the pain. For example you might feel anxious and fearful of pain OR you might feel confident that your surgery was successful because your pain is different than the pain you experienced before surgery.
- Mental thinking – this part of the brain helps us figure out strategies and techniques to relieve and manage pain. Ask yourself, "What can I do to get rid of this?" For example, you decide to take pain medication, use a cold pack to stay ahead of the pain, or try other techniques explained in this handout.

Check out this video
 on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

"Understanding Pain: What to do about it in less than five minutes?"

what you can do to help control your pain

pain management techniques

Take pain medication as prescribed.

In the early stages, especially the first few days after an injury or surgery, it is important to “stay ahead of the pain.” As pain subsides, you can reduce or discontinue medications.

Use ice or cold packs.

If your pain level is high, try using ice packs for 10-15 minutes every few hours for the first few days after injury or surgery. Once swelling decreases, try warm packs to help boost circulation. You can also try alternating warm and cold packs. Using warm and cold also sends other messages to the brain, making it harder for the pain messages to get through.

Elevate.

Prop the injured area of your body above the level of your heart, when possible. This can help decrease swelling as well as decrease “throbbing”-type pain.

Massage unaffected areas.

Massaging areas unaffected by injury or surgery can send “good” sensory stimulation messages to the brain. This makes it harder for pain signals to take over.

Hydration and nutrition.

Drink plenty of water and eat healthy, nutritious, and balanced meals to give you energy and boost your body’s healing power.

Maintain daily routines as able.

Unless you’ve been advised otherwise by your doctor/surgeon, try to continue your normal routine to the best of your ability.

Motion is lotion – Taking a short walk or performing other light activity can help take your mind off of pain while promoting circulation and healing.

Some people may notice pain with light use of non-injured joints and muscles, but rest assured this won’t cause any damage to your healing tissues. In fact, avoiding use of non-injured tissue can lead to pain or even injury of a different area.

For example, if someone has had hand surgery and does not move their arm for fear of injuring their hand, their shoulder can become stiff and painful from not being used or moved. This can be avoided with gentle shoulder motion from the start.

types of pain

ACUTE vs. CHRONIC PAIN

Pain following an injury or surgery is called acute pain. It typically starts at the time of, or shortly after, trauma to tissues and diminishes over time. Acute pain can turn into chronic pain. Chronic pain is any pain that has lasted for weeks, months or even years. It may be constant or recur without further injury. Common chronic pain conditions include headaches, arthritis pain, neck and back pain, or complex regional pain syndrome. Chronic pain conditions usually take more time and effort to learn how to manage day-to-day symptoms effectively.

BREAKTHROUGH PAIN and MEDICATION

For people experiencing pain, sharp spikes of “breakthrough” pain can be a problem. Breakthrough pain occurs when you’re doing something that triggers extra pain messages, like walking too much after knee surgery. Sometimes breakthrough pain happens for no apparent reason.

If you are taking narcotic pain medication, breakthrough pain may be a sign that your body is developing a tolerance to the drug. In this case, an increase in dosage or change in medication may be necessary. If you have questions or are concerned about your medication, please call the nurse line for assistance.

TRIA Nurse Triage Line at 952-806-5456

“Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.”

- Hippocrates, 460-370 B.C.

holistic pain management techniques



Massage.

Massage is an excellent complement to standard medical treatments with proven benefits for relieving stress, pain, and muscle tension.

Deep breathing or cleansing breaths.

When we are in pain, we may not realize that we are holding our breath and/or breathing shallowly. This reduces the available oxygen in our body and puts a strain on muscles around our head and neck, muscles that are not used to performing this work. Try this exercise when pain is intense.



- To begin, lie on your back with legs bent, knees in the air and feet on the floor. Place one or both hands on your belly. Over time, you may progress to a seated position with a straight spine.
- Close your eyes, relax your jaw, and breathe in and out through your nose, controlling the rate and rhythm of your breath. To begin, find an equal inhale and exhale. As you progress, lengthen the exhale to twice as long as the inhale in order to truly expel all of your air.
- On an inhale, fill the lower portion of your lungs by allowing your abdomen to inflate like a balloon. Feel your hand elevate.
- Continue to inhale deeper, feel your ribs expand and your chest rise up as the middle and upper lungs fill with air.
- On an exhale, filter air slowly out of your mouth or nose. Allow your chest to fall, your ribs contract, and your belly deflate. Attempt to bring your navel towards your spine to expel all the air from your lower lungs.
- Repeat for 10 breaths.
- As a variation, repeat a positive word or phrase in your mind with each exhale.
- Return to a normal pattern of breathing and observe the state of your body and mind.

Progressive muscle relaxation.

Understanding how and where your body stores stress allows you to focus on these areas and relax them, helping to relieve pain. This at-home treatment involves visualizing the muscles and body parts individually and actively relaxing them one-by-one from your head to your toes. Try the following exercise to help relax tight muscles.

- Find a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you like and focus on breathing, allowing air to enter and exit your body slowly and easily.
- Become aware of your head, scalp and face. Wrinkle your forehead and feel the muscles tense, relax and feel the muscles relax and melt. Clench your jaw, relax and notice how the muscles soften. Notice the difference between how muscles feel when they are tense versus when they are relaxed.
- Progress with the same technique, tensing and relaxing each area, one at a time: neck, upper back, chest, arms, elbows, wrists, hands, stomach, low back, hips, thighs and knees, ankles and finally your toes. Let all the tension relax and melt away. Revisit any area that still feels tight and repeat as needed to relax. Slowly return your awareness to your surroundings.

PRECAUTION: If you have been instructed by your surgeon not to move an area of your body, follow your doctor's instructions and exercise uninjured areas only.



What is visual imagery?

Visual imagery is a way of viewing your own ideas, feelings, and interpretations of an experience. It can be used as a means to evaluate, transform or eliminate distortions that may unconsciously direct your life and shape your health.

Visual imagery is probably best known for its direct effects on physiology. Through imagery, you can stimulate changes in many body functions usually considered inaccessible to conscious influence.

The following technique can help with the mental and emotional side of pain. Try visual imagery several times a day to help manage and reduce pain.

1. BRING YOUR ATTENTION TO THE AREA THAT HAS PAIN

Notice the characteristics of the pain and assess your pain level. Is it hot, cold, sharp or dull? Does it increase when you move or when you are still? What level is your pain?

2. PICK 3 POINTS IN YOUR BODY, ONE OF WHICH IS THE SITE OF PAIN

Create an "exit route" for your pain using the three points you have picked. For example, if you have low back pain, your three points might be your head, low back, and feet.

3. IMAGINE PULLING HEALING LIGHT/ENERGY INTO YOUR BODY

Imagine this energy or light entering from outside your body through one point, passing through the point of pain, and exiting through your third chosen point.

EXAMPLE

Plant your bare feet on the ground and visualize energy coming from the earth and passing as a cool, soothing light through the area of pain. Continue to visualize this light slowly taking the pain with it and releasing it from your body through the top of your head.

Repeat this visualization technique several times.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR HOLISTIC PAIN MANAGEMENT

TRIA reStore carries CDs and books that may be helpful as you recover, please ask a store team member for additional assistance. The following websites have more information and/or services that may be helpful during your recovery.

healthyjourneys.com

bravewell.org

pathwaysminneapolis.org

couragecenter.org

themarsh.org

Affirmation statements.

When you are in pain, negative thoughts can add to the intensity and emotional component of pain.

You do not have the luxury of negative thinking when your body is trying to heal. Utilize your energy towards positive thinking to help you heal and strengthen your immune system.

Sit or lay quietly and play one or all the following statements over-and-over in your mind.

"I am well. I am feeling better. I am in control of how I feel."

"I trust in my body's ability to heal."

"I trust in my body's ability to welcome in and use what is helpful and healing to me. I also trust my body to reject that which is unhealthy and not needed for healing."

"I am relaxed and calm and I can take charge of this pain. My body has a natural healing process that will reduce or eliminate this pain. This pain will not last."



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