

# PATIENT'S GUIDE TO MANAGING ACUTE PAIN

## How to Take My Pain Medications

Taking non-opioid pain medications around the clock is very effective at treating the cause of our pain after surgeries or injuries, these medications help our bodies heal. This means that you should take these non-opioid medications on a set schedule, instead of only taking them when you're in pain. This helps us heal and keeps our pain under control.

You will alternate between two different non-opioid medications.









**Acetaminophen** (Tylenol®)



**Ibuprofen** (Advil® or Motrin®)

### NON-OPIOID PAIN MEDICATION SCHEDULE

You will be taking a dose of pain medication ~ every four hours:

-  **8:00 a.m.** Take 1000 mg (two pills of 500 mg) of acetaminophen.
-  **12:00 p.m.** Take 400 mg - 800 mg (two to four pills of 200 mg) of ibuprofen.
-  **4:00 p.m.** Take 1000 mg (two pills of 500 mg) of acetaminophen.
-  **8:00 p.m.** Take 400 mg - 800 mg (two to four pills of 200 mg) of ibuprofen.
-  **Bedtime** Take 1000 mg (two pills of 500 mg) of acetaminophen.
-  **If you wake up in the middle of the night:** Take 400 mg - 800 mg (two to four pills of 200 mg) of ibuprofen.

**It is possible you will experience an increase in pain once your nerve block wears off.** Take these non-opioid pain medications on the above schedule for at least three days and for up to one week after your procedure. After one week, you should only take a dose when you're in pain and feel that you need it.

\*If your prescriber decides either ibuprofen or acetaminophen are not right for you, then you may only be prescribed one of the above medications. If so, take prescribed medication every six hours rather than every eight hours.

Your doctor may also prescribe an opioid:

**Example: Oxycodone or Tramadol**

Opioids limit the pain we feel, but they don't treat the cause of our pain. Because of this, we don't use them on a set schedule.

### NON-MEDICATION THERAPIES

- Ice.
- Rest.
- Meditation.
- Mindfulness.
- Art Therapy.
- Music Therapy.

**If you need to take your opioid for additional pain relief, do not stop taking your non-opioids on a set schedule. Those medications make the opioid more effective**

### TIPS FOR IMPROVING SLEEP

- Practice good sleep hygiene
  - Avoid caffeine after 2 pm
  - Avoid screens (ex. phone) at bedtime
  - Develop a bedtime routine (wind down)
  - Do not take opioids to fall asleep
- If needed, talk with your pharmacist about melatonin and other over the counter options

### STILL IN PAIN?

- If your pain is manageable, **avoid taking opioid medication.**
- If your pain is intolerable, keeping you awake and you cannot do any activities:

**Take one pill of your opioid.**

You can take one pill of opioid when you need extra pain relief, but **wait at least 6 hours between doses.**

### WHAT IS THE GOAL OF PAIN CONTROL?



**Minimize pain.**



**Keep you moving.**



**Help you heal.**

# PATIENT'S GUIDE TO MANAGING ACUTE PAIN

## Opioids: What to expect if you require opioids for pain

We recommend you take your scheduled pain medications for at least three days and up to one week after your procedure. After one week, you should be able to transition to taking your pain medications only as needed.

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS & RISKS OF OPIOID USE?

#### Short-Term Side Effects:

- Nausea (very common) or vomiting.
- Constipation.
- Itching.
- Headache.
- Dizziness – do not drive or operate machinery.
- Drowsiness.

**Tip! Take a laxative/stool softener at least once or twice a day when taking opioids.**

#### Serious Risks:

- Misuse, abuse and addiction – risk increases the longer you take them.
- Overdose – taking too much of your opioid.
- Death – results from respiratory depression (slowed breathing) from opioid overdose.

### HOW TO TAPER OFF OF MY OPIOID

**If you required opioids regularly for two weeks or more, you may need to taper off of them:**

- Then, every three to four days, eliminate one tablet a day and extend the interval between doses to every eight hours, then every 12 hours, then once a day.
- The last dose that should be eliminated is the nighttime dose.
- Continue taking your non-opioid medications while tapering off your opioids.

#### EXAMPLE OF A TAPERING REGIMEN:

- Days 1-3: 1, 1, 1, 1 (1 pill every 6 hours)
- Days 4-6: 1, 1, 1 (1 pill every 8 hours)
- Day 7-9: 1, 1 (1 pill every 12 hours)
- Day 10: 1 (1 pill at bedtime)
- Discontinue Opioid

**Please dispose of any unused opioid medication according to the disposal recommendations**

### WHAT DO I DO WHEN I NO LONGER NEED MY OPIOID?

**I took opioids for less than 2 weeks and only when I needed to:** You should be able to stop taking your opioids without feeling any withdrawal symptoms. Please dispose of any unused opioid medication according to the disposal recommendations

**I took opioids regularly for more than two weeks:** Your body is probably getting used to having the opioid medications in your system. Stopping them too quickly may cause you to feel some withdrawal symptoms. You should taper off of your opioid slowly. The right side of this page has information on how to taper off of your opioid.

### WHAT ARE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS?

Withdrawal symptoms are not life threatening. Your body gets used to having opioid medication around, when it leaves you may feel some of the following symptoms. This does NOT mean you are addicted to opioids. It is the same as when people get a headache from not having caffeine, it is expected with regular use. Common symptoms of withdrawal are listed below, if you experience significant withdrawal side effects, call your provider for guidance.

- Anxiety/Restlessness
- Rapid/Short Breaths
- Trouble Sleeping
- Wide Pupils
- Sweating
- Runny Nose

# PATIENT'S GUIDE TO MANAGING ACUTE PAIN

## Post-Operative Medication Checklist