

Pain Medicine Instructions

You may need pain medicine after an injury or illness. Two common types of pain medicine are:

- Non-opioid pain medicine. This includes NSAIDs.
- Opioid pain medicine. These may be called opioids.

Pain medicine may not make all of your pain go away. It should make you comfortable enough to move, breathe, and do normal activities.

How can pain medicines affect me?

Pain medicines can cause side effects such as:

- Vomiting or feeling like you may vomit.
- Belly pain.

Opioids can cause other side effects, such as:

- Trouble pooping (constipation).
- Feeling very sleepy.
- Confusion.
- Trouble breathing.
- Addiction to opioids. This means that you will take the medicine even though it hurts your health.

Taking opioids for longer than 3 days raises your risk of these side effects.

Taking opioids for a long time can affect how well you can do daily tasks. It also puts you at risk for:

- Car crashes.
- Depression.
- Suicide.
- Heart attack.

If you do not take pain medicines correctly, you may be at risk for:

- Liver problems.
- Kidney problems.
- Taking too much of the medicine (overdose). This can lead to death.

What actions can I take to lower my risk of problems?

Know your treatment plan

Talk about your treatment plan with your doctor. Both you and your doctor should agree on how you should be treated.

- Talk about the goals of your treatment, including:
 - How much pain you might expect to have.
 - How you will manage the pain.
- Ask your doctor if you can see other doctors who can treat your pain without using medicine. This can include physical therapy and counseling.
- Talk about the risks and benefits of taking these medicines for your condition.

- Tell your doctor about the amount of medicines you take and about any use of drugs or alcohol.
- Get your pain medicine prescriptions from only one doctor.
- Keep all follow-up visits.

Take your medicine as told



- Take pain medicine exactly as told by your doctor. Take it only when you need it.
 - If your pain is not too bad, you may take less medicine if your doctor allows.
 - If you have no pain, do not take the medicine unless your doctor tells you to take it.
 - If your pain is very bad, do not take more medicine than your doctor tells you to take. Call your doctor to know what to do.
- If your pain medicine has acetaminophen in it, do not take any other acetaminophen while you are taking this medicine. Too much can damage the liver.
- Write down the times when you take your pain medicine. Look at the times before you take your next dose.
- Take other over-the-counter or prescription medicines only as told by your doctor.

Avoid certain activities



While you are taking prescription pain medicine, and for 8 hours after your last dose:

- **Do not** drive.
- **Do not** use machinery.
- **Do not** use power tools.
- **Do not** sign legal documents.
- **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** take sleeping pills.
- **Do not** take care of children by yourself.
- **Do not** do any activities that involve climbing or being in high places.
- **Do not** go to a lake, river, ocean, spa, or swimming pool unless an adult is nearby who can monitor and help you.

Keep pets and people safe

- Store your medicine as told by your doctor. Keep it where children and pets cannot reach it.
- **Do not** share your pain medicine with anyone.
- **Do not** save unused pills. If you have unused pills, you can:
 - Bring them to a take-back program.

- Bring them to a pharmacy that takes back unused pills.
- Throw them in the trash. Check the medicine label or package insert to see if it is safe to throw it out. If it is safe, take the medicine out of the container. Mix it with something that makes it unusable, such as pet waste. Then put the medicine in the trash.
- Flush them down the toilet only if this is safe to do. To find out:
 - Check the label or package insert of your medicine.
 - Read information given by the Food and Drug Administration website: [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov)

Treat or prevent constipation

You may need to take these actions to prevent or treat constipation:

- Drink enough fluid to keep your pee (urine) pale yellow.
- Take over-the-counter or prescription medicines.
- Eat foods that are high in fiber. These include beans, whole grains, and fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Limit foods that are high in fat and sugar. These include fried or sweet foods.

Contact a doctor if:

- Your medicine is not helping with your pain.
- You have a rash.
- You feel sick to your stomach.
- You throw up.
- You feel depressed.

Get help right away if:

- You have trouble breathing. This means:
 - Breathing that is slower than normal.
 - Breathing that is more shallow than normal.
- You are confused.
- You are sleeping a lot, or you have trouble staying awake.
- Your skin or lips turn pale or bluish in color.
- Your tongue swells.
- You have thoughts of harming yourself or harming others.

These symptoms may be an emergency. Get help right away. Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).

- **Do not wait to see if the symptoms will go away.**
- **Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**

Get help right away if you feel like you may hurt yourself or others, or have thoughts about taking your own life. Go to your nearest emergency room or:

- **Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.).**
- **Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or 988 in the U.S. This is open 24 hours a day.**
- **If you're a Veteran:**
 - **Call 988 and press 1. This is open 24 hours a day.**
 - **Text the Veterans Crisis Line at 838255.**

Summary

- Pain medicine can help lower your pain. It may also cause side effects.
- Take your pain medicine exactly as told by your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor about other ways to manage your pain.
- Ask what activities you should avoid while taking pain medicine.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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