

Narcotic Fact Sheet for Patients

Please read the information below regarding what to expect following your surgery, the goal of post-operative pain management and the side effects of the medications prescribed.

What to expect after surgery

- Almost all surgical procedures result in some level of pain and discomfort. Pain and discomfort is generally greatest immediately after surgery and subsides as time goes on.
- Reducing your pain is a priority for caregivers
- Over time, your pain will reduce and may be eliminated completely
- Oral narcotic medication is frequently administered to patients after surgery to help control post-operative pain. It is important to note that although these medications are effective for the treatment of acute pain, use beyond that can be detrimental to your health.
- It is vital that you discontinue use of these medications **as soon as your pain allows**

Narcotic medication: Facts you need to know

- Physical dependence to opioids (which means the absence of opioids can produce withdrawal symptoms) can occur at prescribed doses.
- Opiate abuse is on the rise in recent years and has tripled in the US since 1990.
- 5 million people in the United States are addicted to opiates.
- There are 17,000 opiate overdoses per year in the US.
- There were nearly 5 million drug related ER visits in 2010; 425,000 from narcotic pain relievers.
- Every day in the US, 46 people die of prescription drug overdoses.
- Unintentional deaths from prescription narcotics outnumber those of heroin or cocaine.
- **Adverse reactions to opioids include:**
 - Sleepiness
 - Difficulty controlling arms/legs
 - Constipation
 - Limit ability to fight infection
 - Itching
 - Hormonal imbalance
 - Decreased breathing
 - Drug interactions
 - Death
- **Potential risk factors for opiate abuse include:**
 - Age 18-34
 - Male
 - 4 or more opioid prescriptions
 - Refilling prescriptions early
 - Opioid prescriptions from 2 or more pharmacies or physicians
- **Early symptoms of withdrawal:**
 - Agitation
 - Anxiety
 - Muscle aches
 - Insomnia
 - Sweating
- **Late symptoms of withdrawal:**
 - Abdominal cramping
 - Diarrhea
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting

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