

EDUCATION FOR PATIENTS REGARDING OPIOID USE AND POST-OPERATIVE PAIN MANGEMENT

Medications are an important part of your treatment and you should work closely with your prescribing doctor to understand the risks, benefits, and alternatives of taking any medications, including opioids. The decision to take prescription opioids is your choice. These medications may be used to help relieve moderate to severe pain following surgery. Pain relievers such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen [Advil] or naproxen [Aleve]) may be the best choice and have fewer risks and side effects. Studies have indicated that when ibuprofen and acetaminophen are taken in combination, that they are equivalent or better than opioid pain medications for pain relief. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen are recommended if you are not allergic, or have not been told to avoid these medications. However, not everyone responds well to the over-the-counter medications or is able to tolerate them. In these instances, opioids can be considered for pain management.

When considering your pain management options, it is important to read and understand the following information prior to taking an opioid pain medication (i.e. Norco, hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine):

Opioid medications may have the following side effects:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Constipation
- Itching and sweating
- Dizziness, confusion, or sleepiness
- Opioid overdose can cause slowed breathing and can even be fatal
- Addiction, including physical dependence

Do not drink alcohol with an opioid medication. If you drink alcohol with this medication it can slow down your breathing, or stop it altogether.

Do not drive when taking an opioid medication. If you are driving and are stopped while taking this medication, you may be charged with a DUI.

Do not run machinery or other heavy equipment while taking an opioid medication. You may have difficulty thinking clearly, or you may not be able to respond quickly when taking this medication, which could place you or others around you in danger.

Store opioid medications in a locked cabinet, drawer, or lockbox. Because of the potential for addiction and misuse, opioids should be kept away from anyone not prescribed and should not be shared with anyone. You should do everything to prevent others from taking this medication.

Dispose of opioid medications properly if you have any leftover tablets. For disposal information, check with your local law enforcement or county website. (Hennepin: <https://www.hennepin.us/medicine> - Scott: www.co.scott.mn.us - Carver: www.co.carver.mn.us). Please keep this information until all opioid medication is used or disposed of properly. Additional resources can be found with the CDC (www.cdc.gov) and FDA (www.fda.gov).

Opioid medication can be addictive. Usually, patients do not become addicted to opioids if used as prescribed and if taken for a short period of time. However, people respond to medications in different ways, and it is important to know that there are risks. Report any addiction problem to your doctor.

Only take the prescribed medication as directed. Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed. Inform your doctor of all medications and health issues including any history of drug or alcohol abuse.

Your doctor may consult the state Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) before prescribing you opioids.