

# Managing Pain at Home

## WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

Please call your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of these conditions or side effects:

- ▼ Can't stay awake or are hard to wake up
- ▼ Have more pain, or pain that you can't tolerate
- ▼ Feel numbness, tingling, or weakness where you don't expect it; including around your mouth and lips
- ▼ Feel sick to your stomach or are vomiting
- ▼ Are constipated
- ▼ Are dizzy, feel lightheaded, or have fainted
- ▼ Have a fever
- ▼ Have itching or a skin rash
- ▼ Have ringing, buzzing, or a whistling sound in your ears
- ▼ Have a metallic taste in your mouth
- ▼ Feel coolness, tightness, or pain around and incision
- ▼ Have blurred vision
- ▼ Are taking pain medications to relieve stress, anxiety, or to help you sleep

Call 911 right away if you have trouble breathing, or they can't wake you up

## Why is pain management important?

Successful pain management doesn't always mean taking away your pain completely. Good pain management allows your body and mind to focus on healing. As you and your healthcare providers manage your pain, you can expect to:

- ▼ Be able to move around more easily
- ▼ Have fewer complications
- ▼ Feel less stress

## Pain and your daily activities

Pain can affect your quality of life and your day-to-day activities including: eating, sleeping, bathing, dressing, housework, cooking, driving and going to the bathroom.

Some strategies that can help with daily activities are:

- Pace physical activities-avoid doing too much at one time
- Use proper body mechanics/posture to avoid re-injury or increased pain
- Ask for help-identify family or friends that are available to help you
- Use assistive equipment such as a shower seat and/or bathroom safety rails

Your healthcare team will work with you to identify your personal pain goals as well as strategies to reach these goals. Refer to your discharge instructions for additional information on your pain management plan of care.

## Pain relief without medication

You may be able to take fewer doses of pain medication (or skip it completely with your healthcare provider's okay) when you use one of these other ways to relieve pain. Ask your healthcare provider which may work best for you.

- ▼ Cold or heat
- ▼ Guided imagery and distraction
- ▼ Physical therapy or gentle exercise
- ▼ Massage and repositioning
- ▼ Relaxation or meditation
- ▼ Spiritual or emotional counseling

## Pain relief medication

Your healthcare provider may give you one or more prescriptions for pain medication. There are many different pain medications, and they control pain in different ways.

- ▼ **Tylenol, or anti-inflammatory medications.** These may be over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), or prescription anti-inflammatories. You often take these on a different schedule than your other medication. Don't take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or any other medication with your prescriptions, unless your healthcare provider says it's okay.
- ▼ **Prescription pain pills.** These include opioid medications such as morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone, among others. These drugs are powerful, but can be safe and effective when used as directed. Opioid medications can cause various side effects. **Constipation** is the most common side effect. Drinking extra water and taking laxatives can help. Opioids can also cause increased sleepiness to the point where it may **slow or decrease breathing**. This is the most serious side effect, and it can kill you. Your risk is higher if you take too many pain pills or mix them with alcohol or street drugs.

## Tracking your medication

To prevent medication mistakes, don't use a pill box for your pain medication. It's better that you and your caregiver(s) write down when you take your medication and how much you take. This will help you know if you've taken your pills, and help keep you from taking too many. The chart below is an example of how you should track your medication:

MEDICATION	TIME	HOW MUCH?
Tylenol	1:45 PM	1 Tablet

### PAIN MEDICATION SAFETY

- ▼ **Don't take more medication than your healthcare provider tells you to.**
- ▼ **Don't take your pain medication for reasons other than pain relief.**
- ▼ **Never use alcohol or street drugs when taking opioid pain medications.** The combination can kill you.
- ▼ **Don't drive or use heavy machinery until you know how the medication affects you.**
- ▼ **Keep the medication in the bottle it came in.** The label has instructions and information you need.
- ▼ **Don't share your pain medication with anyone.** Don't give your pills to friends or family members, even if the person is in pain.
- ▼ **Lock up medication where it's safe.** Don't keep your pain pills in your medicine cabinet where anyone can find them.
- ▼ **Safely dispose medications.** Do not throw away medications in regular waste bins.

pharmacies provide safe medication disposal. For help finding a safe medication disposal location, call 1-800-882-9539 or visit

[disposemy meds.org](https://www.disposemy meds.org)