

Pain Medication and You

*Providing an unmatched healthcare experience
for patients and families.*



Hospice of Palm Beach County
Hospice by the Sea
trustbridge



24/7 Caregiver Support: (888) 441-4040 | trustbridge.com

Pain Medications

There are many different medications used to treat pain. Pain medications can be given in many ways: by mouth, under the tongue, on the skin, or through injections. These are some examples of pain medications:

- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)**
- **Fentanyl (Duragesic)**
- **Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)**
- **Methadone**
- **Morphine**
- **Oxycodone**
- **Oxycodone and acetaminophen (Percocet)**

Medications work differently for each person. Your care team will find the right pain medication for you and your condition.



Side Effects

Side effects are not exclusive to pain medications. All medicines have side effects, however, not everyone experiences them. Serious reactions from taking pain medications are rare. Some of the

most common side effects of pain medications are constipation, nausea and vomiting, dry mouth, sleepiness, itching, and dizziness. The good news is that most of these side effects can be managed easily with other medicines and most often go away on their own after a few days.



Constipation

Some pain medications can slow down the bowel and lead to hard stools and/or make you use the bathroom less often. Stool softeners and/or laxatives are recommended to help with constipation. Drinking more water, warm prune juice, and eating more fruits and vegetables may also help to relieve constipation.



Nausea or Vomiting

This usually only lasts for the first day or two of your treatment. We have medication to control these symptoms that your physician may have ordered. If you have nausea or vomiting, try to avoid strong odors, drink small sips of water or ice chips, eat small amounts of bland foods such as rice or dry toast.



Dry Mouth

Dry mouth can improve by increasing your fluid intake as tolerated, eating popsicles or ice chips. Contact Trustbridge if dry mouth is severe or persistent.



Sedation or Drowsiness

Some people may feel tired, groggy, or “fuzzy headed” when they first take pain medicine or when the dose is increased. If sleepiness is due to pain medication, it will stop after a couple of days. Caffeinated drinks such as coffee and tea can help to reduce sedation.



Itching

Some people may feel itchy and want to scratch different parts of their body. It may occur when a dose is started or increased. This may last for up to 3 days. It might seem like an allergic reaction, but allergies to pain medications are not common. We have medication to help with itching.



Dizziness

Some may experience dizziness when starting or increasing the dose of the pain medication. Avoid sudden changes in position. Move slowly. Ask for help if needed.

Myths and Common Concerns



In some cases, concerns about the risks of pain medications may limit proper care. Some common concerns and myths include:

Side Effects

Symptoms such as nausea, constipation, and drowsiness may cause people to want to avoid pain medications. You may think you are having an allergic reaction; however, allergies to pain medications are rare. Your care team will help prevent or manage side effects that you may experience.

Addiction

When a person has pain, the body uses medication differently than if he or she were taking the drug to get high. Addiction is a psychological desire to use a drug for its effects on the mind (to get high). When Morphine or other opioids (narcotics) are given to relieve pain, they are not addictive.

Tolerance to Pain Medication

Pain medication administered correctly does not stop working with time, but as the disease progresses, it may be necessary to change the medication or the dose. This does not indicate addiction or tolerance but rather a natural progression of the disease.

Fear of Overdose

Your care team will monitor your response to the pain medications and will make changes according to your specific needs.

Morphine Hastens Death

Pain medications like Morphine or other narcotics are used often to treat people with moderate to severe pain. Research shows that increasing the dose of narcotics at the end of life does not shorten your life. Morphine doesn't cause death, the underlying disease does.



Time Out for Training

The comfort of you or your loved one is our priority. If you have questions or concerns about pain medications and/or side effects, ask your care team. If we are not explaining it in a way that you understand, signal a “Time out for Training.”

Trustbridge Patient and Family Hospice Care Training Guide



www.trustbridge.com/patient-family-resources

888.441.4040

24/7 Caregiver Support

Resources:

American Hospice Foundation. (n.d.). Use of Opiates to Manage Pain in the Seriously and Terminally Ill Patient. Retrieved March 2023, 2023, from <https://americanhospice.org/caregiving/use-of-opiates-to-manage-pain-in-the-seriously-and-terminally-ill-patient/>

National Cancer Institute. (2023, January 9). Cancer Pain (PDQ®)–Health Professional Version. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/pain/pain-hp-pdq#_58



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