



NORTHSIDE HOSPITAL

English - Spanish - French

Safe Pain Management & Prescription Opioids

What is Pain Management?

At Northside Hospital, our goal is to help you manage your pain safely. We want to work with you and your family to provide safe and effective care.

Medications are just one way to relieve pain. Using alternative pain treatment options can decrease your need for pain medication. Ask your care providers for more information and assistance in trying some of these pain treatment options:

- Cold or warm compresses
- Immobilization or support
- Meditation and prayer
- Deep breathing and imagery
- Dim lighting
- Quiet room
- Positioning
- Movement
- Massage and gentle touch
- Rest
- Music therapy
- Pet therapy

Your provider may have prescribed a special class of pain medications called opioids that can relieve moderate to severe pain due to surgery, injury, or certain health conditions. Opioids can be an important part of treatment but also come with serious risk.

What are Opioids?

Opioids are a special class of pain medications that can relieve moderate to severe pain due to surgery, injury, or certain health conditions. Some commonly prescribed opioids include:

- Hydrocodone
- Oxycodone
- Morphine
- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Tramadol
- Buprenorphine
- Methadone
- Hydromorphone
- Oxymorphone

Make sure you know the names of your medications, how much and how often to take each medication, the potential risks and side effects, and any alternatives. Take your medications only as directed and report side effects to your care providers immediately.

Side Effects

The most common side effects of pain medications include itching, nausea, vomiting, sleepiness and constipation. Additionally, opioids also have the following side effects:

- Confusion
- Depression
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Tolerance
- Physical dependence
- Decreased sex drive
- Increased sensitivity to pain

Side effects can happen even if you are taking your medication as directed. More information on back...

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Associated Risks

Prescription opioids carry serious risks of addiction and overdose, especially with prolonged use. Opioid overdose can cause sudden death, so take your medication only as prescribed and avoid alcohol while taking opioids. Unless specifically advised by your health care provider, also avoid taking other medications like benzodiazepines, muscle relaxants, hypnotics and other opioids.

Opioid risk is greater in patients with a history of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose, as well as those with mental health conditions like depression or anxiety. Sleep apnea, pregnancy and old age also increase risk.

Signs of Addiction

- Taking more than prescribed
- Taking an opioid for reasons other than its prescription reasons (i.e. for psychological effects or to feel high)
- "Craving" just one more pill or refill
- Feeling unable to stop taking an opioid
- Seeking prescriptions for more than one injury or with multiple doctors or pharmacies
- Changes in behavior such as hostility, or excessive mood swings
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Withdrawing from friends, family or social activities
- Neglecting responsibilities; distracted, unable to focus, confused
- Mixing pills and alcohol

If you or someone you know are experiencing signs of addiction, ask for help. Contact Northside Hospital Behavioral Health Services at 404-851-8960. northside.com/behavioralhealth

When opioids are a part of your pain management plan, talk to your care providers about your risk for addiction, alternative treatment options, and how long you will need to take your medications. Discuss a plan for reducing or discontinuing your opioid use to minimize your risks.

Safe Storage & Disposal

When taking prescription opioids, safe storage and safe use are critical to prevent misuse and abuse. Always keep your medication to yourself, and never share or sell prescription opioids. Never use another person's medication, and always store opioids in a secure place, locked or out of reach.

Always dispose of unused medications safely. For more information on safe disposal of medications visit: lockyourmeds.org or drugfree.org

To find a medication drop box in Georgia visit: stoprxabuseinga.org/prescription-drug-disposal/

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