
Using Medications Appropriately to Manage Chronic Pain

Tips for Using Pain Medications Safely:

- When discussing treatment options, inform your healthcare provider if you or someone in your family has a history of mental illness or substance abuse.
- Keep your healthcare provider updated with a list of all of your current medications. (Be sure to include over-the-counter medications, herbal preparations and or supplements.)
- Inform your healthcare provider about any allergic or undesirable reaction you have had to a medication. (Make sure that this information is included in your medical records.)
- Become familiar with your medications. Be aware of the names and doses of your medications, how often and how to take them, what you are taking them for and any potential side effects.
- If you don't understand how to take your medication or have other questions about it, be sure to ask your healthcare provider for the answers that you need.
- When you pick up your prescription from the store, check to be sure you are receiving the right medication at the right dose and in the right form (for example: a pill, liquid or etc.). Keep your medications in the container in which they came.
- Take each medication exactly as instructed. Do not crush, break, or chew pills unless directed to do so.
- If taking a liquid medication, use the measuring implement that came with it or measure it exactly as instructed.
- When possible, use only one pharmacy for all of your medications. This is particularly important if you are taking opioid medications.
- Do not mix your opioid pain medications with alcohol, antihistamines, barbiturates or benzodiazepines. This combination can slow your breathing rate and become life- threatening. Check with your healthcare provider if you are uncertain if you are taking any of the above medications or if you are uncertain about drug combinations.

- Be careful when first taking a new pain medication to observe how the medication affects you; do not drive or use heavy machinery until your healthcare provider advises it is OK.
- Never take a medication that has been prescribed for someone else. Never randomly change the dose or time schedule of your medication without first checking with your healthcare provider. Never share your medication with someone else.
- Store all medications in a dry, cool place that cannot be accessed by children, pets, or individuals who might take your medications. It is preferable to store medications in a locked area or container for safety.
- Use a pain diary to record your pain and to record how your medication and other treatments are working to reduce your pain.