Pain, Taking Care of Your Pain at Home

Taking care of your pain is important to your health. Your doctor has prescribed pain medicine for you to use at home. It may not be possible to make all of your pain go away, but you should be comfortable enough to move, breathe and take care of yourself.

WHEN TAKING PAIN MEDICINE:

- Do not drink alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) while using pain medicine.
- Take only the medicine that your doctor tells you to take.
- Take your pain medicine on time if you have pain most of the day.
- Do not skip doses of your pain medicine or take more than your doctor tells you to take.
- Take pain medicine with some food to keep from having an upset stomach.

TYPES OF PAIN MEDICINES

Opioids

- These are strong medicines used for bad to very bad pain.
- You must have a prescription to get these medicines.
- Take these medicines with a snack and plenty of water.

These medicines may cause side-effects such as:
- Feeling tired or dizzy.
- Feeling sick to your stomach.
- Throwing up.
- Itching.

Tell your doctor if you have any of these side-effects and they do not get better. You may be having an allergic reaction and need to switch to a different medicine.

A common side effect of opioids is constipation. Constipation is poop that is small, hard and dry and hurt to pass). You may need to take a laxative. Take these medicines the way it tells you to on the label. It also helps if you eat fruits, vegetables and cereals. Drink plenty of water also.

Non-opioids

- These medicines may be used alone for mild to moderate pain, or they may be taken along with opioids to boost pain relief. Some will also lessen swelling.
- Do not take more than the dose listed on the label.
- Take these medicines with a snack and plenty of water to avoid an upset stomach.
- These medicines may cause you to have sticky, black stools.

OTHER WAYS TO LESSEN PAIN

You may try some of these helpful ways to lessen stress and pain. They may make your pain medicine work better.
- Ice or Heat
  - A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a thin cloth makes a good cold pack.
  - A moist washcloth in a plastic bag warmed for a few seconds in a microwave makes a good warm

pack.
  - Leave the cold or warm pack on for 20 minutes, then off for 20 minutes.
  - You will know whether ice or heat is best for your pain depending upon how you feel after trying both.
- Deep Breathing
  - This will help relax your whole body.
  - Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose as you count to 5.
  - Hold your breath for a couple of seconds.
  - Breathe out slowly through your nose.
- Distraction (Doing Something Else)
  - Take your mind off your pain by doing something you enjoy. Talk with friends and family. Listen to music, watch a movie, do hand work, read, meditate or pray.
- Total Muscle Relaxation
  - Close your eyes. Tighten your foot muscles.
  - Hold for a few seconds. Then relax the muscles.
  - Now tighten the muscles of your calves. Hold. Relax.
  - Work slowly up your body in this way.
- Imagery
  - Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Picture yourself in a quiet, peaceful place.
  - Imagine how you feel in that place.
  - If other thoughts enter your mind, take a deep breath and try again.
- Exercise
  - When your doctor says you are able to, you may begin to exercise and stretch your muscles. Exercise helps lessen the risk of getting a blood clot, keeps you limber and strong, and produces a positive mood.

TELL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE:

- Pain that does not get better, even after taking your pain medicine the way you were told to.
- Feeling sick to your stomach and throwing up, watery poop, stomach cramps, or dry, hard poop that hurts to pass.
- Dizziness or feeling over-tired after taking your pain medicine.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF YOU HAVE:

- Trouble breathing, bad itching, or a rash after taking your pain medicine.

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