

## Opioid Safety

Opioids are used to treat severe pain after surgery, broken bones or major injuries. For your own safety, it is important to follow your doctor's instructions about opioid use.

### Follow these guidelines for safe opioid use:

- ▶ Do not drive while taking opioid medication.
- ▶ Never take opioids in a greater quantity or more often than prescribed by your doctor.
- ▶ Do not drink alcohol or take illegal drugs while taking opioid medication.
- ▶ Never share opioid medication.
- ▶ Never stop your medications without asking your doctor.
- ▶ Notify your doctor about any side effects or concerns you have.
- ▶ Opioids can interact with other medications. Give your doctor a complete list of all your medications, including over-the-counter medications.

### Follow these instructions to safely store prescription opioid medication:

- ▶ Keep your prescription opioids in the bottle they came in. The label has important information and it helps protect the medication from exposure to light.
- ▶ Store prescription opioids in a secure place, out of reach of others. This may include visitors, children, friends and family. Do not keep opioids in your medicine cabinet where anyone can find them.

### How should I dispose of opioid medication?

- ▶ Whenever possible, take your unused prescription opioid medication to a collection program. To find a one-day or long-term collection location nearest to you, contact the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Waste Reduction Unit at 217-558-4115 or visit [EPA.Illinois.gov/Medication-Disposal](http://EPA.Illinois.gov/Medication-Disposal).

**If there is not a collection program in your area, dispose of your prescription opioid medications at home in the following way:**



**All medication:** Remove or mark over all labels that identify the name of the medication and your personal information.



**Pills and Liquids:** Place medication pills in a small amount of very warm water so they dissolve into a liquid. Pour the dissolved pills and any liquid medication over crumpled newspaper, paper towels, coffee grounds, kitty litter or another absorbent material. Place in a container or small double plastic bags, securely close and hide in your trash.



**Patches:** Because of the risk of accidental exposure, it is recommended to flush any drug patches down the toilet. Do NOT flush medication pills or liquids down the toilet. Fold the patch in half with the sticky sides together. Immediately flush the patch down the toilet.

If you are unsure how to safely dispose of a specific medication, please contact your pharmacist.



# Managing Pain During Your Stay

[ChooseMemorial.org](http://ChooseMemorial.org)

**Memorial**  
HEALTH SYSTEM 

## What is Pain?

Pain is an uncomfortable feeling that your body uses to tell you that something may be wrong. It can be described as steady, throbbing, stabbing, aching, pinching or in many other ways. Sometimes it's just a nuisance, like a mild headache. At other times it can be debilitating.

Pain can occur anywhere in the body. The way you feel pain is unique to you. We care about your pain. Nurses will talk to you about how much pain you are having.

## Telling Us about Your Pain

Tell your nurse...

**HOW** the pain feels.

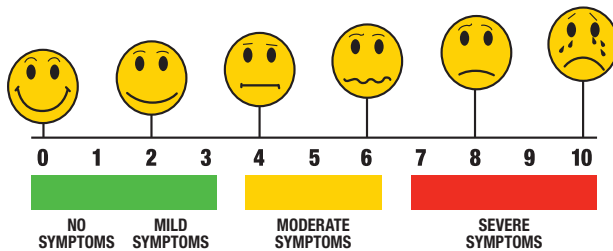
- ▶ Is it burning? Stabbing? Sharp?

**LOCATION** of the pain.

- ▶ Is the pain in one spot? Can you point to it with one finger?
- ▶ Does it start in one spot and shoot to another part of the body?
- ▶ Is it located in an entire area of your body and difficult to pinpoint?

**HOW MUCH** pain you are having.

- ▶ You will be asked to rate your pain on a scale of 0-10, 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain you have ever had.



## Making a Plan to Treat Your Pain

Your pain may be treated in a number of ways—your doctors, nurses and you, will choose what works best for you based on the location and type of pain that you have. The better your pain is managed, the faster you are likely to recover.

**Some options for treatment include:**

- ▶ Non-medicine treatment options such as heat/cold therapy, breathing techniques, repositioning and many more.
- ▶ Pills
- ▶ Medications administered through an IV

*Not all pain medications contain opioids such as morphine or codeine. If you are concerned about opioids, talk to your nurse about other pain management options.*

**Call your nurse...**

- ▶ If your pain is getting worse.
- ▶ If you feel your body is ready for pain treatment.
- ▶ If your pain is not being controlled.

**Will all my pain be gone?**

Although we would like to take all your pain and discomfort away, some pain during your hospital stay is normal. However, we will try to keep you as comfortable as possible.

## Watching for Side Effects of Pain Medications

The most common side effects of pain medications are drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, constipation, itching and hallucinations. Tell your nurse if you experience any side effects so your treatment can be changed.

In addition, your nurse will watch for side effects. This may include occasionally waking you up if you are sleeping or using additional monitoring equipment.

**Will I become addicted to pain medication?**

It is important that you and your doctor discuss treatment options, carefully considering all of the risks and benefits. Some medications, such as prescription opioids, can help relieve pain in the short term. To help eliminate the risk of addiction, only use medications as prescribed and follow up regularly with your doctor.

**Be honest with your doctor about your history.**

- ▶ Have you had an addiction to prescription or illegal drugs in the past?
- ▶ Are you addicted to tobacco or alcohol?
- ▶ Do you have a history of mental illness?

## Setting Goals for Pain Relief

You will set your treatment goals in partnership with your doctors and nurses. These goals are focused on getting you back to your daily activities.

**Some examples:**

- Today I will sit in the chair.
- Tonight I will walk to the bathroom.
- Tomorrow I will take a shower.