



Safe treatment of acute pain

Most kinds of acute pain get better quickly on their own, or with safe medicines and non-drug treatments.

This brochure will help you understand your treatment options for managing acute pain from an injury such as a broken bone or sprain, or after surgery.

Opioid safety information

- **Naloxone** can prevent opioid overdose for patients and household members.



- **Store opioids safely.** Place opioids in a secure location. Don't share your medications with others.



- **Dispose of unused opioids.** Get rid of these opioids in disposal bins at pharmacies or police stations, medication take back events, or in activated charcoal bags (like Deterra).



Find a drop-off location at:
bit.ly/dropoff_locator

Most forms of acute pain improve, *often without any prescription medication*

Often, the goal is not to be totally free of all pain, but to be able to perform your usual activities as fully as possible as the discomfort improves.

Your healthcare professional can evaluate your acute pain and help you manage your symptoms while you improve. For unusual or especially severe pain symptoms, additional testing or more aggressive treatment may be needed.

When does acute pain become chronic pain?

When pain lasts more than 3 months or longer than the expected time of healing, it's considered chronic pain.

If you are being treated for acute pain, follow up regularly with your healthcare professional to be sure that your pain and function are improving normally, so your treatment can be changed if it isn't.



Chronic pain:

Longer than expected healing or 3+ months of pain



Combine multiple options to help relieve pain

Non-drug options

- education about the expected course of healing
- compression and elevation for sprains & strains
- heat (warm compresses)
- physical therapy
- exercise



Medication options

- NSAIDs like naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, and generics), or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, and generics)
- acetaminophen (Tylenol and generics)
- topical treatments (e.g., diclofenac, lidocaine patches)

These options work as well if not better than opioids to relieve pain, without dangerous side effects.

If opioids are needed

If you are prescribed an opioid, **take only the smallest amount necessary to relieve the pain**, and stop it as soon as you can, while continuing other pain management treatments.

Watch out for opioid side effects, including:

- constipation (can be severe)
- tolerance (the drugs work less well over time, requiring higher doses)
- confusion
- dizziness/unsteadiness
- nausea
- itchiness
- problems with erections
- withdrawal symptoms after stopping
- possible addiction



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These are general recommendations only; specific medical decisions should be made by the treating clinician based on an individual patient's clinical condition.

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