

WHAT IS PAIN?

Everybody knows when it hurts, but have you ever really thought about what pain is? It is the body's natural response to tissue damage from trauma, heat or chemical burns. Pain can also arise from the nerves themselves. Some pain comes from direct stimulation of nerve endings and other pain can come from the inflammation that follows damage.

There are three ingredients needed for us to feel pain. First, a nerve ending reacts to a painful stimulus. Second, a signal is transmitted through the spinal cord to the brain to recognize the stimulation. Finally, the brain produces an emotional response that you perceive as discomfort. That is the difference between simply feeling something and having it feel painful.

Managing Your Pain

Pain can be controlled at any of those three points in the process. Each medicine inhibits pain in a specific place, but they all come with unique side effects that can be serious. You have received this pamphlet because your dentist has prescribed a narcotic. Although narcotics are very effective pain relievers, they have a high potential for harmful side effects (including addiction) and must be used with caution.

Your Dentist's Role in Managing Pain

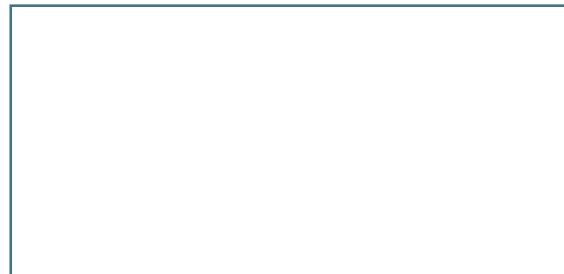
Your dentist wants you to be comfortable. They have taken steps to prevent your discomfort during procedures and while you recover. Even with those efforts, you may have some pain. This is normal. The purpose of your prescription is to maintain that pain at a tolerable level, not to eliminate it.

Recognizing the Potential for Abuse

Using medications to control pain should only be done under a doctor's supervision. Taking medicines prescribed for someone else or for problems other than the one for which they were prescribed, is abuse. The effect of underlying stress or depression may be reduced when taking an opioid which can lead to abuse. Young people are especially vulnerable. When the prescribed dose was previously effective but no longer seems adequate, or there is a temptation to combine the drug with alcohol, seek professional counseling.

I've Got A Problem

The New Mexico Crisis and Access Line (NMCAL) is a drug crisis hotline for residents of New Mexico who are either victims themselves or know someone who needs counseling support in combating substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and other behavioral problems. It is a toll-free 24/7 line. 1-855-NMCRISIS (662-7474). The TTY number is 1-855-227-5485.



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Where Does it Hurt?

Managing Your Pain Safely and Effectively

Taking Your Prescribed Medication for Pain

It is important that no matter what medicines you take, you should carefully follow instructions as they were given to you. Your dentist recommends that even if you have been given a prescription for a narcotic, you should attempt to manage pain by other means first. Here are the recommendations:

1. If you have had a dental procedure, take a regular dose of ibuprofen or acetaminophen before the anesthetic wears off.
2. Alternate between Acetaminophen 325mg [1 regular strength tablet] or 500mg [1 extra strength tablet] and Ibuprofen 400-800mg [2-4 over-the-counter capsules/tablets] every 3-4 hours.
3. If you continue to experience pain beyond what you can tolerate, substitute one of the narcotic pills in place of the Acetaminophen. If the pain persists, take the full prescribed dose and discontinue other medications. Do not exceed the dose or frequency on the prescription. Keep in mind that narcotic combinations often contain acetaminophen and you should not exceed the maximum daily dose of either acetaminophen (4000mg) or Ibuprofen (3200mg).

DENTISTS INSTRUCTIONS:

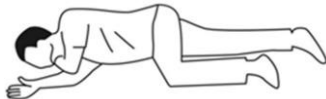
What To Do In An Emergency

Taking too much opioid medication or mixing it with alcohol or other drugs can result in an overdose. Symptoms of overdose may begin anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours after taking the drug. The drug causes suppressed breathing which prevents oxygen from reaching vital organs and results in the body beginning to shut down. Have a friend or family member monitor your condition while you are taking narcotics.

The signs of overdose are:

- Loss of color or cold sweat
- Non-responsive to name or firm shaking
- Blue fingertips and lips
- Deep snoring or gurgling sound
- Erratic or stopped breathing
- Weak or non-existent pulse

If you suspect an overdose, call 911. If you must leave the victim to call, place them on their side with the bottom arm over their head and the top leg crossed over the body (see below). If they vomit, it will help avoid aspiration. Be prepared to provide detailed information on location, the victim's condition and any medications taken.



About Naloxone (Narcan®)

If you take opioids for chronic pain or if your doctor prescribed more than 5 days of pills, you may be given a prescription for Naloxone. Having someone administer Naloxone will rapidly reverse the effects of opioid overdose. It typically comes in two forms: an auto-inject syringe or a nasal inhaler. Carefully read the instructions that come with the device or ask the pharmacist about the proper use.



Naloxone only works for opioids, but if you are uncertain what drugs may have been taken, it is better to go ahead and administer the medicine. Provide rescue breathing, if necessary. Stay with the victim and comfort them until help arrives. Because Naloxone counteracts the effects of opioids, the victim may begin to have symptoms of withdrawal, but this discomfort is the price of saving their life. Do not allow them to take more opioids.

Disposing of Unused Medication

Follow any specific disposal instructions on the drug label or patient information that accompanies the medication. Take advantage of community drug take-back programs that allow the public to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see if a take-back program is available in your community.

In Albuquerque, several police substations will accept unused pills, or you can bring them to the New Mexico Department of Public Safety facility at 6301 Indian School NE, Suite 310.

The Drug Enforcement Administration, working with state and local law enforcement agencies, is sponsoring National Prescription Drug Take Back Days (www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov) throughout the United States. Pharmacies cannot take unused medications back but may have programs available for mail-in disposal.



If a give-back program is not available, the FDA recommends flushing most opioid medications or mixing them with an undesirable substance like kitty litter or coffee grounds in a sealed plastic bag and disposing of them in the trash. An FDA publication on safe disposal can be found at <https://www.fda.gov/media/74164/download>.