

Pain can usually be managed well with the right medications. You are starting a medication for your pain. Use this handout to help you take your medicine safely.

TELL YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE 3-5 DAYS BEFORE YOU NEED A MEDICATION REORDERED

REGULAR DOSE OF PAIN MEDICATION(S):

Take this medication **exactly** as prescribed, whether you have pain or not.

BREAKTHROUGH PAIN MEDICATION:

This medication is not taken regularly, but only **AS NEEDED** to treat pain that 'breaks through' your regular medication dose. (You may or may not be prescribed a breakthrough medication.)

Keep track! Use the chart provided, a diary or App...just keep track!

- Record when you are taking breakthrough medications.
- Record the time and amount.
- Show it to your health care team.

Who do I call if my pain is not under control?

- Your oncology team (available weekdays during office hours)
Clinic contact: _____ Tel. _____
- Your primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner)

Cancer Helpline: 204-787-8900

You can also access the Urgent Cancer Care clinic on the 1st Floor, next to the Hematology lab at 675 McDermot Avenue.

Who do I call after regular office hours or on weekends? *For any CancerCare Manitoba patient*

Call *paging* and ask for the doctor covering for your CancerCare Manitoba doctor:

Health Sciences Centre (HSC) at **204-787-2071**

St. Boniface Hospital at **204-237-2053**

You may be having pain for many reasons. Your health care team wants to help you control your pain and work with you to improve your quality of life. Most types of cancer pain are treated with medication. There are pain medications available to treat many different types and levels of pain. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy or surgery may also help treat your pain.

Patient and Family Support Services: 204-787-2109 or Toll free: 1-866-561-1026

- For information about non-medication treatments that pain that can help such as relaxation, distraction and other mind-body approaches.

Pain and Symptom Management Clinics

- For patients who are struggling with pain or other symptoms related to their cancer or cancer treatments.
- When the oncologist, family doctor or nurse practitioner is having difficulty managing the pain or discomfort.
- You need to be referred by your doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Available by MB Telehealth for patients outside of Winnipeg.

Don't change your medication dose on your own!

Tell your nurse or doctor if the pain medication is not controlling the pain.
You may need a different dose or a different medication.

Facts About Pain Medications

- A variety of medications can be used to improve your pain and quality of life. The type of pain you have will determine the medication that your doctor prescribes.
- It may take up to 3 days to get good pain relief when you start a new medication or increase your dose.
- If you wait too long before taking your pain medication, the pain may be harder to control and it may take longer for the medication to relieve the pain.
- Take your medication as directed. This will help keep the medication in your body at the same level, ensuring that the pain control is constant.
- Many pain medications require a special prescription that must be taken to the pharmacy within 3 days. You do not have to fill the prescription right away. The pharmacy can keep the prescription on file until you need it.
- Many people wonder if they will become addicted to pain medication. Addiction is an uncontrolled urge to use medications or other substances when there is no medical need. When medications are used to treat pain, addiction is rare. The body can become used to the medication, and a higher dose might be needed. This is called tolerance. If tolerance happens, talk to your health care team.

What are Opioids?

Opioids are a type of pain medication used to treat moderate to severe pain.

Examples: morphine, codeine, oxycodone, hydromorphone, or fentanyl.

Opioid Side Effect	Explanation and Action
<p>Constipation (difficulty having a bowel movement)</p> <p><i>*You should have a bowel movement every 3 days or more often.</i></p>	<p>Opioids slow down the movement of the gut (bowels). As soon as you start opioids you need to prevent constipation. Take medicine for your bowels the whole time you take opioids. The medicines in steps 1-4 do not require a prescription. They are all available over the counter.</p> <p>Step 1: Use a stool softener. Take 2 capsules of <i>Docosate (Colace®)</i> in the evening. If not working, add 2 capsules in the morning.</p> <p>Step 2: At the same time also use a stool stimulant (laxative) that contains <i>senna or sennosides (Senekot®)</i>. Start with 2 tablets <i>Senekot®</i> at night. If not working, add 2 tablets in the morning. If this is still not working, increase to 4 tablets two times a day. <i>Docosate/sennosides (Senekot-S®)</i> contains a softener and stimulant and could be used instead of <i>Colace®</i> and <i>Senekot®</i>.</p> <p>Step 3: If still constipated, add another laxative, such as <i>Lactulose or Polyethylene Glycol (Lax-A-Day®, PEG-3350, Go-Lytley®)</i>. Follow product directions.</p> <p>Step 4: If still constipated, add a <i>glycerin suppository or bisacodyl suppository (Dulcolax®)</i>. Keep in place for at least 15 minutes. Don't use a suppository if you have low blood counts or have a bleeding problem.</p> <p><i>*If you are still constipated after these 4 steps, contact your health care team.</i></p>
<p>Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach, feeling like you will throw-up)</p>	<p>Some patients feel nausea when opioids are started. This usually subsides over a few days.</p> <p>Dimenhydrinate (<i>Gravol®</i>) may help. It does not require a prescription. Follow product directions.</p> <p><i>*If Gravol® does not work, call your health care team.</i></p>
<p>Feeling Sleepy (drowsiness)</p>	<p>When you start or change opioid pain medications, you may feel a bit sleepy (drowsy). This usually lasts about 3-5 days.</p> <p><i>*If the drowsiness is severe or continues after 5 days call your health care team.</i></p>
<p>Confusion (unable to think clearly, being "mixed up")</p>	<p>Confusion is rare. It can happen when you first start taking an opioid. People can also get confused when they have been taking opioids for a long time because the medication can build up in the body.</p> <p>Contact your health care team if you or your family notice confusion. The health care team may change the medications or change the medication dose.</p>

Swallowing Problems

- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are having trouble swallowing your pain medication. Your medicine might be available as a liquid or a patch. There might be something else that can help.
- Some short acting medications may be crushed and mixed with liquids if needed.
- **Ask your pharmacist before crushing any medications.**
- Long acting pain medication taken every 8 or 12 hours **should not** be crushed.