

Common drugs for Pain

What drugs can treat pain?

There are literally hundreds of medicines that can decrease pain. Each one may have side effects. Some side effects could be serious. It's important to listen to your doctor carefully when she or he tells you how to use your pain medicine. If you have questions about side effects or about how much medicine to take, ask your doctor or your pharmacist. Here are some common medicines for pain.

Acetaminophen

Acetaminophen (brand names: Tylenol®, Panadol®, etc.) helps many kinds of chronic pain. Remember, many other over-the-counter and prescription pain medicines also have acetaminophen in them. So if you're not careful, you could take more acetaminophen than is good for you. Taking too much acetaminophen could cause liver damage. If you often have to take more than two acetaminophen pills a day, tell your doctor.

Anti-inflammatory Drugs

Other drugs that help with pain are called "anti-inflammatory" drugs. Examples include aspirin, ibuprofen (brand names: Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®, etc.) naproxen, (brand name: Naprosyn®, Aleve®) and the COX-2 inhibitors such as celecoxib (Celebrex®). These medicines can either be taken just when you need them or they can be taken every day. When these medicines are taken all the time, or "around the clock," they build up in the blood to levels that fight the pain of inflammation (swelling) and also give general pain relief. Many of these medicines are available without a prescription in low-dose forms.

If your doctor wants you to take an anti-inflammatory drug, always take it with food or milk, since the most common side effects are related to the stomach. If you are taking other pain medicines, don't take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory drugs without first talking to your doctor.

Narcotics

Narcotics can be addicting, so your pain doctor will be very careful about prescribing them. However, in many people with severe chronic pain, these drugs are an important part of therapy. If your doctor prescribes narcotics for your pain, be sure to carefully follow your doctor's directions. Tell your doctor if you are uncomfortable with the psychological changes that may go along with these medicines, such as inability to concentrate or think clearly. Do not drive when taking these medicines.

When you're taking narcotics, it's important to remember that there is a difference between "psychological addiction" and "physical dependence." Physical dependence

on a medicine means that your body gets used to that medicine and needs it to work right. When you don't have to take the pain medicine any longer, your doctor can help you slowly and safely decrease the amount of medicine until your body no longer "needs" it.

Psychological addiction is the desire to use a drug whether or not it's needed to relieve pain. Using a narcotic this way can be dangerous and may not help your pain. If you have psychological addiction to a narcotic, your doctor may give you another drug to help with your psychological problems. Or your doctor might recommend that you talk to a counselor. Your doctor might also change the medicine that you are psychologically addicted to, by lowering the dose, changing to another drug or stopping the medicine altogether.

Narcotic drugs often cause constipation (difficulty having bowel movements). Constipation is a real problem with narcotic medicines. If you are taking a narcotic medicine, it's important to drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water every day. Try to eat 6 to 8 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables every day, too. Be sure to tell your doctor if constipation becomes a problem for you. Your doctor may suggest taking laxatives to treat or prevent it.

Other Medicines

Many drugs that are used to treat other illnesses can also treat pain. For example, gabapentin and pregabalin, both seizure medications, can treat some kinds of pain. Amitriptyline, trazodone, and duloxetine (Cymbalta®) are common antidepressants that can also help with chronic pain in many people. Your doctor may want you to try one of these medicines to help control your pain. It can take several weeks before these medicines begin to work well, so follow your doctor's advice carefully. Muscle relaxant drugs such as baclofen or tizanidine can also be used.

Remember--if you are taking any pain medicine, be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medicine, either prescription or nonprescription.

Are drugs the only way to treat chronic pain?

No. Many other treatments can also decrease pain. Almost anything we do to relax or get our minds off our problems can help control pain. It's important to find ways to add these relaxing activities to your daily life, even if you are already taking medicine for pain. You might have to use stress reduction methods for several weeks before you notice a decrease in pain. Your doctor can give you tips about stress reduction and relaxation methods. Nerve blocks, surgery, and exercise may also be helpful.

This information provides a general overview on treating chronic pain and may not apply to everyone. Talk to the doctors at Newport Pain Management to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject.