

Weaning off your pain medication

Many patients are concerned about becoming addicted to their pain medication. Although this is possible, understanding the difference between addiction and tolerance is important when trying to discontinue the use of pain medications. The vast majority of patients who have joint replacements do not become addicted to their pain medications. However, you do build a tolerance with any extended use of narcotics.

Here is a step-by-step guide to helping you discontinue the use of pain medicines gradually. This structured method of tapering off your pain medications will help curb some of the symptoms of narcotic tolerance, which may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, body aches, anxiety, agitation, sweating, etc.

It is important to note that the appropriate time to wean off varies from patient to patient. On the average, most patient will start the weaning process one to two weeks after surgery. This guide assumes that you are following the typical pain regime of Oxycontin or MS Contin (long-acting) and Percocet/Norco (short-acting). If you leave the hospital taking only short-acting pain medicine, refer to Step 3 of this process.

Step 1

Start by discontinuing the daytime long acting medication Oxycontin or MS Contin, but maintaining the nightly dose and the short acting pain medication.

Step 2

After three to five days, discontinue the evening dose of Oxycontin or MS Contin . At this stage, you will be using Percocet and Celebrex as main medications for pain control. Don't forget you can still use ice for relief of pain.

When trying to taper the Percocet or Norco, start by decreasing the number of pills each time you take these medications. For example, if you typically take two at once, cut back to one table each time you take the medication. If this does not cover your pain entirely, you can take a second tablet as needed at your bedtime dose or before therapy.

Step 3

After three to five days of decreasing the number of tablets, the next step is increasing the time between doses. If you start by taking a dose every four hours, try every five to six hours, etc.

You may need to take pain medicine intermittently for a number of weeks after surgery for flares of pain.

Included is a Medication guideline along with an example page for you to help schedule your medication for home.

Day/Date	Med # 1	Med #2	Med #3	Med #4	Med #5	Med #6	Med #7
	<u>Oxycontin ER</u>	<u>Tylenol</u>					
	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose
Sunday	10mg/ 8AM 8PM/ Pain	325mg/ 2 tabs every 4-6 hours					
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							

Day/Date	Med # 1	Med #2	Med #3	Med #4	Med #5	Med #6	Med #7
	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose	Dose/time taken/purpose
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							