

Using Medications for Persistent Pain

Medications can help you live better with pain. Here are some common pain medications and tips on how to use them well.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol, is the safest initial treatment of mild to moderate pain. If your pain is constant, take it regularly, every 4 to 6 hours.

Do not take more than the recommended amount, though. If you take too much acetaminophen, it can damage your liver. Keep your **total** amount at or below 4000 mg a day (8 extra-strength tablets or 12 regular tablets). This includes other pills, such as cold medicines, that have acetaminophen in the ingredients.

Aspirin-Like Drugs, or NSAIDs

Aspirin-like drugs are called “non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs,” or NSAIDs. They are sometimes better than acetaminophen, especially for some types of pain. However, they have more side effects, some of which are serious.

Your doctor will help you decide whether you should try an NSAID, and which one you should try.

Narcotic Analgesics, or Opioids

Narcotic analgesics, or opioids, are the strongest and most dependable medicines for controlling severe pain. They do not cause drug addiction when you use them like your doctor tells you to. Opioids do have side effects, though. Constipation occurs in most people who take them daily.

Your doctor can give you more information about using opioids for severe pain.

Other Pain Medicines

Other medicines can help your pain and its complications. Depression pills help pain and can help you feel and move better. Seizure medicines are often used for certain types of pain that do not improve with other methods.

Ask Your Doctor

If you know that your pain is worse at certain times or with certain types of activities, consider taking stronger medicine before you expect the pain to worsen. Talk with your doctor about what stronger medicine you should use.

Medicines are just one part of a plan to improve your life when pain is a problem. Your doctor can give you information about other ways to live better with pain. Learn about your pain and how to control it.