

Opioid Safety After Surgery

After surgery, you are likely to experience some pain and discomfort. A short course of prescription pain medication (opioids) may be used to treat this pain. As part of our mission to provide the highest quality care, this handout is provided for your safety.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STAY SAFE

- **USE:** Take your medications only as directed by your doctor. **DO NOT** share your medications with anyone — sharing your prescriptions is illegal and could endanger other people's health. If you are taking benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, etc.), consult with your prescriber on managing these medications with opioids. Combining opioids with these medications can slow or stop breathing. **DO NOT** mix opioid medications with alcohol. Avoid driving or operating heavy machinery while taking opioids.
- **STORE:** Store prescriptions securely in their original containers. Keep them out of sight and out of children's reach, preferably in a locked cabinet or high shelf.
- **DISPOSE:** Dispose of medications immediately after your pain symptoms have resolved. Unused medications should be disposed using the product DisposeRx® (provided by HSS), or at a takeback facility or a medicine drop box. You can dispose of medications using the prescription medication drop box at HSS, located on the ground floor of the Belaire Building (525 E 71st Street). You can also search for other public disposal locations at <https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch>

SIDE EFFECTS

- Controlling pain is an important part of your recovery process. However, these medications can cause side effects. These side effects can include constipation, nausea, dry mouth, sleepiness, and dizziness. Contact your surgeon for uncontrolled pain or for help with side effects.

MISUSE AND OVERDOSE RISKS

- When misused, prescription medications may be just as dangerous as illegal drugs.
- Misusing your medications can have serious consequences, including lack of energy, inability to concentrate, physical weakness, nausea, vomiting, and suppressed breathing to the point of death. If you have not taken your medications as directed, and you experience any of these symptoms, please go immediately to an emergency room. If you feel that you have taken more medication than what was prescribed, seek immediate medical attention.
- Misusing your medications may also lead to addiction—it is imperative that you take your medications only as prescribed.
- As you recover from surgery your opioid use should decrease. If severe pain persists or your opioid requirements increase, please notify your surgeon.

Opioid Safety After Surgery

FOR YOUR SAFETY WE DO NOT ROUTINELY

- Prescribe long-acting opioids.
- Prescribe more than one short course of short-acting opioids.
- Refill lost, stolen or destroyed prescriptions.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- National Institution on Drug Abuse: <http://www.drugabuse.gov>
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/prescription.htm>
- FDA recommendations: <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/default.htm>

OPIOID EDUCATION VIDEOS

- These videos provide important safety information. Please type in the link or scan the QR code below to learn more.
 - Opioid Safety After Surgery: hss.edu/OpioidEducation
- **Topics include:**
 - Safe Opioid Use & Storage
 - How to Safely Dispose of Opioids
 - How to Taper Off Opioids After Surgery

SCAN TO WATCH OPIOID EDUCATION VIDEOS:



SEARCH FOR PUBLIC DISPOSAL LOCATIONS:

