

Sample Educational Material

Prescribing Pain Medication in the Emergency Department

Our emergency department staff understands that pain relief is important when someone is hurt or needs emergency care. However, providing pain relief is often complex. Mistakes or misuse of pain medication can cause serious health problems and are a major cause of accidental death. Our emergency department strives to provide pain relief options that are safe and appropriate.

Our main job is to look for and treat an emergency medical condition. Chronic pain is best managed and coordinated by a primary care provider or a pain specialist outside the emergency department.

We use our best judgment when treating pain, and follow all legal and ethical guidelines. For your safety, we:

- May not refill stolen or lost prescriptions for medication.
- Do not prescribe missed methadone doses or long-action pain medication that has a high risk of addiction or overdose.
- Review your health and prescription history to determine the best approach to managing your pain.
- Prescribe the most appropriate pain medication favoring those with the lowest risk of addiction or overdose, and for no longer than necessary.
- Take into consideration whether you already receive pain medication from another health care provider or emergency department, and whether you have a doctor who can follow up on your condition.
- Will help you find treatment for any pain or medication problems that you may have.

Content adapted from a poster entitled, "Prescribing Pain Medication in the Emergency Department" by the Washington State Department of Health, Washington Chapter American College of Emergency Physicians (WA/ACEP), et al, August 19, 2013.

This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to prescribe a particular course of treatment, deter you from seeking treatment, or take the place of the clinical judgment of your treating physician. It is also not intended to establish a legal or medical standard of care. Any questions about this information should be addressed to [insert hospital contact person].