



## ORAL SURGERY CARE

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### POST-SURGICAL PAIN MANAGEMENT

You can expect to be uncomfortable for the next few days, but we will do everything possible to help you manage your pain, and to manage it safely. Keep in mind that not all pain relief is in the form of a pill. Application of ice (20 minutes on, 20 minutes off) can be helpful. Quiet relaxation and meditation are effective for pain management, and many online resources describe the basics of these techniques. Expectation of success is the most powerful pain management tool of all. Studies have shown that a strong expectation and hope of successful pain relief causes the brain to release very effective pain relieving chemicals into your bloodstream.

The most effective and safest pills to take for postsurgical dental pain are Advil and Tylenol, taken together, if you are not allergic to or have not been told to avoid these over-the-counter (OTC) medications. Ibuprofen—Advil—can be taken along with acetaminophen—Tylenol—by taking them together at the same time or by staggering the starting doses. If they are staggered, Advil should be taken first (400mg, or two of the OTC tablets), followed two hours later with Tylenol (either one 325mg regular strength or one 500mg extra strength), followed two hours later with 400mg of Advil. Continue with this schedule by the clock for the day of surgery, up to and including bedtime; then as needed. In this way Advil and Tylenol are each taken at four hour intervals, but there are only two hours between a dose of one or the other. This can increase the placebo effect, which is very real in helping to control pain. If Advil and Tylenol are taken together at the same time, the above dosing amounts may still be followed. Aleve (naproxen), taken as directed on the bottle, may be substituted for Advil.

Double-blind studies routinely show that the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as Advil and Aleve, taken along with Tylenol, are as good as or better than the opioid pain medications at controlling postsurgical dental pain, with risks significantly lower than with the opioids. We are especially concerned about these risks for the adolescent and young adult population. Their still-developing brains are especially vulnerable to permanent changes in brain chemistry that opioid medications may cause, which can prime the brain for future substance misuse and addiction. Recent data showed a 33% higher incidence of misusing opioid pain pills during the college-age years for children who took legitimately prescribed opioid pain pills before finishing high school.

The risk for addiction is always present when taking opioids, and we cannot predict who is most likely to develop a problem with misuse, abuse, or addiction. This can start from a single prescription. Eighty per cent of new heroin users started with opioid pain pills, and most of those pills were first prescribed for legitimate medical reasons. Opioid addiction is cutting across all socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds, including right here in the suburbs and cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. We acknowledge the opioid crisis, and are committed to providing the information necessary for you to make informed decisions about your health.

*Please see the other side of this page for a discussion about prescription opioid pain pills.*



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### PRESCRIPTION OPIOID PAIN MEDICATION

Not everyone responds well to or is able to tolerate the over-the-counter (OTC) nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pain medications, such as ibuprofen (Advil) or Aleve. If pain is severe and unremitting while using Advil or Aleve, along with Tylenol, ice, and relaxation, a prescription pain medication may be helpful. Before considering an opioid (narcotic) pain medication, it is very important for you to read and understand the following information:

#### **Side effects of opioid pain medications:**

- Potential for misuse and addiction
- Slowing or stopping your breathing
- Dizziness and light-headedness
- Faintness or sleepiness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Constipation

**Opioid medications are addictive.** Usually, patients do not become addicted to opioids if used as prescribed and taken for a short period of time. However, people respond to medications in different ways, and on rare occasion abuse and addiction are triggered by a single legitimate prescription. It is important to understand the very real risk of addiction.

**If you take an opioid prescription medication that contains Tylenol:** Do not take any other Tylenol or Tylenol-containing medication, but continue to take 400mg of ibuprofen—Advil—every four hours.

**You must not drink alcohol with an opioid pain medication.** This can slow down your breathing, or stop it altogether.

**Do not drive when taking an opioid medication.** If you are driving and are stopped while taking a prescription opioid pain medication, you may be charged with a DUI.

**Do not run machinery or other heavy equipment when taking an opioid medication.** You may have difficulty thinking clearly, or you may not be able to respond quickly when taking an opioid medication, which could place you or others around you, in danger.

**Store opioid medications in a locked cabinet, drawer or lockbox.** Because of their potential for addiction and misuse, opioids should be kept away from anyone not prescribed and should not be shared with anyone.

**Dispose of opioid medications properly if you have any leftover tablets.** For disposal information, one source is [www.dakotacountysheriff.org](http://www.dakotacountysheriff.org), in the “Services” drop down box.

**Please keep this information** until all opioid medication is either used up or disposed of properly.

*Contact our office if you have reviewed this information  
and feel you may benefit from a prescription opioid pain medication.*