

Texas Back Institute

Narcotic Information Sheet

Narcotic medications can be an effective and safe treatment of your pain. It is only one aspect of your care. Your cooperation in all aspects of your prescribed management is necessary in order to maximize your condition outcome.

Goals of therapy include pain reduction, improvement in level of function and overall improvement in quality of life. Pain medications should supplement other aspects of your care.

The following is a list of the most common side effects and reactions related to narcotic medication usage. We have also included precautions and potential preventative measures.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECT

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

Constipation

Increase regular exercise, fluid intake and fiber-rich food in your diet. You may require over-the-counter stool softeners.

Nausea and Vomiting

Stop the medication and contact our office.

Drowsiness

Typically improves with medication use. **DO NOT DRIVE OR OPERATE MACHINERY DURING THIS TIME.** Your family should be aware of the medication you are taking and instructed to take you to the Emergency Room if you become difficult to awaken.

Rash or Itching

Contact our office.

Urinary Retention

Contact our office. Extreme situations may require temporary catheterization to drain the bladder.

Insomnia or Depression

Contact our office.

Impotence

Contact our office.

Breathing Difficulty
(Slow or shallow breathing)

A rare but potentially serious side effect. **Stop the medication, call 911 or take the patient directly to the Emergency Room.**

Impaired Reasoning or Judgment

Contact our office.

Tolerance

The need for increasing amount of drug to achieve the same pain relief. This occurs with long-term use and new medications of equal strength may be substituted.

Physical and Emotional Dependence
“...occurrence of an abstinence syndrome after abrupt discontinuance of the drug...”

This is not a problem but does require tapering off the medication to avoid withdrawal. Speak with your physician before discontinuing any medication.

Addiction
“...compulsive use of a substance resulting in physical, psychological, or social harm to the user and continued use despite that harm...”
AMA Task Force TBME, Vol 15, Number 1

Withdrawal and perhaps detoxification may be required under physician supervision.