

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PAIN MEDICATION



Chronic pain is a chronic disease, just like diabetes or hypertension. Medication is an integral part of the treatment plan and is often necessary to manage the pain. Like diabetes, chronic pain can be controlled by taking medication every day at specific times.

Different types of drugs are used to relieve pain or treat related problems, such as depression and anxiety. These include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories, opiates (such as morphine and its derivatives), anticonvulsants, antidepressants (used specifically for their effect on pain or depression, if present), cannabis derivatives, cortisone, anxiolytics and muscle relaxants.

In many cases, a combination of several types of medications is necessary to provide adequate relief. Your doctor will assess the effects of different medications and find the best combination for you.

### Pain medication

Pain medications act on receptors throughout the body to reduce the intensity of pain. Medication can relieve,

i.e. reduce, pain, but can rarely make it disappear! It's important to have realistic expectations about what your medication can do.

The medication your doctor prescribes may have unpleasant side effects, particularly if you are starting something new or if a dose is changed.

These side effects can sometimes be minimized by taking other medications, such as a laxative to counter the constipation that often occurs when you take opiates (e.g., morphine).

Pain medications can also cause interactions with other chemical agents. That's why it's so important to tell your doctor about everything you take, including vitamins and natural products.

### Why take medication?

Medication can improve your quality of life. By controlling your pain, it allows you to focus on other things. With the pain at bay and not taking over your life, you can do more and experience pleasure during the course of your day.

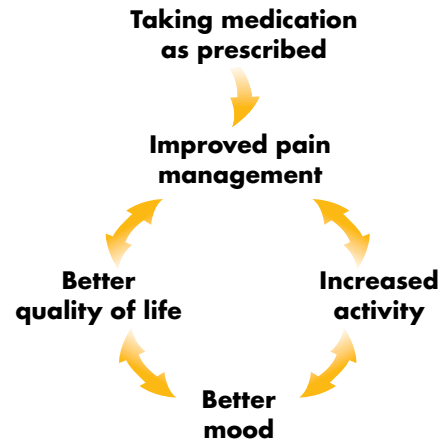
In general, the medication will have to be continued for a minimum of three to six months, that is until the pain is stabilized. But feeling better does not mean you can stop taking the medication. You can have a full and happy life with your pain under control, even if that means taking medication regularly.

If you want to benefit fully from your treatment plan, it's important to participate actively. That means learning about and understanding the medications you take.

## Here are some important things to remember:

- 1) Know which medications you take and what each one does.
- 2) Take your medications exactly as prescribed by your treatment team.
- 3) Take your medications at the right time of day, e.g. morning, afternoon or night.
- 4) Continue taking your medications even if you are feeling better. Always speak to your doctor or pharmacist before making any changes or if you want to stop taking something.
- 5) If your pain is not under control, take note of the following:
  - The intensity of the pain at different times during the day
  - The kind of activity you did during the day
  - The medication you took to relieve the pain
  - The beneficial and undesirable effects you felt

All this information is important. Your doctor needs it in order to make any necessary adjustments to your medication.



Remember that you can live a healthy life even with a chronic disease, but you must stay active, informed and involved in your treatment. That's the key to success!