



OrthoCarolina's Position Statement Narcotic Prescriptions

OrthoCarolina, though an orthopedic medicine practice, recognizes the importance of considering all aspects of our patient's health in deciding on a treatment plan. OrthoCarolina also recognizes that orthopedic problems can be painful, fortunately usually for a short period of time. Pain is a normal response to an injury or surgery. The goal is to manage the pain, not eliminate it. We are also aware of the narcotic (opioid) misuse crisis which affects much of our country. Our State legislature has recently passed laws directed at limiting the amount of prescription narcotics available in hopes of impacting this epidemic.

With all of this in mind, OrthoCarolina providers will work with each of our patients to develop a plan for managing the pain associated with the orthopedic problem. The best approach is to manage the pain using a variety of treatments. The options include:

- Patients prepare themselves for surgical success by improving their overall health. This might include weight reduction, stop smoking, diabetes control, reduce or eliminate narcotic medication, and physical therapy.
- Use ice therapy to help control pain and swelling.
- Use non-prescription medication such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).
- Nerve blocks and other medications may be used at the time of surgery.
- Narcotic medication

Narcotic medicine can be helpful in treating acute (early) pain. This medicine type does have side effects and risks. In addition to the side effects of nausea, constipation, itching, and depression, more serious side effects can occur. There is an increased risk of falls, breathing difficulties, slower healing and the development of tolerance to the drug where increasing amounts of the drug are needed to obtain the same effect. This can lead to addiction to the narcotic with potential overdose. We now understand that narcotics are not effective in treating pain for longer periods of time.

The State now has legislation which restricts the amount of narcotics which can be prescribed. In most cases no more than 5 days of narcotics can be prescribed for acute problems. For surgical patients, 7 days of narcotic can be prescribed. After these periods of time, each situation will be assessed to determine how to manage the pain going forward.

In reality, this approach is not much different than what was done in the past for most conditions. In the past, as a convenience to our patients, more narcotics were prescribed, thinking that only that which was needed would be used. This approach has now been proved wrong. This resulted in too much of this potentially dangerous medication being available for misuse. OC wants our patients to know that we feel that this multiple method approach to pain management is not only safer, but better. We expect your pain to be better controlled with this approach.

This needs to be a team effort, with the patient being the most important member. You can help your provider by following instructions and doing what you can to improve your health.

- Inform your provider if you have had problems managing pain medicines in the past.
- OC providers must follow the laws and policies which limit the amount of narcotics given to patients.
- Narcotics cannot be refilled after hours or on weekends. On Call provider cannot renew narcotic prescriptions.
- If you anticipate needing a refill on the narcotic, contact your provider 48 hrs. before a refill is needed.
- You can only receive a narcotic prescription from one provider.
- Properly dispose of unused drugs. [PATIENT ED NARCOTICS DISPOSAL.pdf](#)