



Texas Back Institute

Narcotic Information Sheet

Narcotic medication(s) can be an effective and safe part of your pain treatment. It is only one part of your treatment. Your cooperation in all aspects of your prescribed pain management program is necessary and expected if you are to continue receiving narcotic medication(s).

The goals of your pain therapy include a reduction in the level of your pain and your improved ability to function on a day-to-day basis, i.e., improved quality of life. The pain relief you receive from your medication(s) should improve your ability to engage in physical and social activities and therefore help you to return to a more normal lifestyle.

The following is a list of the most common side effects and complications related to the use of narcotic medication(s). We have also enclosed a list of the precautions and preventive treatments for some of these patterns:

<u>PROBLEM</u>	<u>TREATMENT</u>
Constipation	Increase your regular exercise, fluid intake and add more bulk-forming foods to your diet. You may need to take over-the-counter or prescription stool softeners.
Nausea and vomiting	Stop the medication and call the office.
Excessive drowsiness	This will usually improve as you continue the medication. DO NOT DRIVE OR OPERATE MACHINERY DURING THIS TIME. Your family should be aware of the medication you are taking and be instructed to call the office or take you to the emergency room if you become difficult to arouse. If your pain has caused you to lose sleep, you may find that you are sleeping a lot after taking the narcotic medication(s). You may simply be getting the rest you need. In this case, you are not experiencing the side effect of the drug, but a benefit of the drug.
Itching	Call our office.
Urinary retention	Call our office. You may need temporary catheterization of your bladder to help drain the urine.
Insomnia	Call our office.
Depression	Call our office as soon as possible.



Texas Back Institute

PROBLEM

TREATMENT

Reasoning and judgment may be impaired

Call our office.

Respiratory depression (suspect this if the patient has slow and shallow breathing or stops breathing)

This is an extremely rare but potentially serious side effect. Stop the medications. Contact our office immediately and/or take the patient to an emergency room. If respiratory depressions remain undetected, there is a risk of cessation of breathing and possible complications related to the lack of oxygen, including death.

Impotence

Call our office.

Tolerance (the need for an increasing amount of a drug to achieve the same pain relief)

Chronic pain patients may develop tolerance to the narcotic medication(s). If tolerance develops, new medication(s) of equal strength can be substituted for the medication you have been taking.

Physical and emotional dependence on narcotics may occur "...a pharmacologic property characterized by the occurrence of an abstinence syndrome after abrupt discontinuation of the drug..."

This is not a problem. Dependence requires a tapering off to avoid withdrawal. Talk to your doctor before you discontinue any medication(s).

Addiction may occur "...a chronic disorder characterized by the compulsive use of substance resulting in physical, psychological or social harm to the user and continued use despite that harm..."

This problem is rare in patients who suffer from chronic, intractable pain, but this may be the price the patient must pay when trying to achieve pain relief. Withdrawal and detoxification will be needed if an addiction occurs.