

If You Recently Had an Injury



Acute pain after an injury will get better as your body heals. There are many options to help you manage your pain during this time.

Your doctor may talk to you about prescription opioids to help manage your pain. Ask your doctor these questions to fully understand the risks and benefits of opioids.

1 Are opioids necessary to reduce my pain?

Opioid medications are one of many ways to reduce acute pain, but many other options have been shown to work with fewer side effects, including:

- Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen
- Application of heat or ice
- Physical therapy, acupuncture, or massage

2 What can I expect if my doctor prescribes opioids to reduce my pain?

Opioids can reduce pain in the short-term, but will not likely relieve all of your pain. The goal of any pain treatment is to safely reduce pain and increase your ability to do everyday activities.

Discuss what kind of pain relief and improvement you can expect overall. Prescription opioids may have side effects like sleepiness and dizziness. Even when taken as directed there is a risk of tolerance (needing more of the drug to produce the same effects) and physical dependence (experiencing withdrawal when the drug is stopped).

3 How long will I need to take prescription opioids?

Opioids should only be used when necessary and only for as long as necessary. Generally, for acute pain this means 3 to 7 days or less. If you are taking opioids for more than a few days, set up a follow-up appointment with your doctor to reevaluate your pain. Your doctor can help you cope with possible withdrawal symptoms when you stop taking opioids.



Acute pain: usually starts suddenly and has a known cause, like an injury or surgery. It normally gets better as your body heals.

Opioids: natural or manufactured chemicals that bind to receptors in your brain and body to reduce pain. Common prescription opioids include oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine.

