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## Post-Operative Pain Management

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**The following program will greatly decrease your post-operative pain:**

Naproxen 220 mg every 12 hours **OR** Ibuprofen 600 mg every 8 hours

**PLUS**

Acetaminophen 650 mg every 8 hours

1. Naproxen (Aleve or Naprosyn) 220 mg in the morning and afternoon, for about 2-3 days after the surgery; even if you have no pain. You can stop two days after surgery if your hand does not hurt. The maximum daily dose of naproxen is 1000 mg per day.
    - a. If you cannot tolerate naproxen, you may substitute 600mg ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) every 8 hours for about 2-3 days after the surgery.
    - b. Do not take naproxen or ibuprofen if you have a history of liver disease, kidney disease, reflux, or stomach ulcers.
    - c. Do not take naproxen or ibuprofen if you are taking blood thinners such as coumadin (Warfarin), apixaban (Eliquis), dabigatran (Pradaxa), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), aspirin (Bayer, Ecotrin), enoxaparin (Lovenox), or heparin.
  
  2. Acetaminophen 8-hour (Tylenol Arthritis or similar), 650 mg every eight hours for about 2-3 days after the surgery, even if you have no pain. Acetaminophen plus naproxen (or acetaminophen plus ibuprofen) is a case of 1+1=3, not 2. That is, they work together as a team to make each other stronger
    - a. The maximum amount of acetaminophen is 3000 mg per day, which is just over 4 of the 650 mg pills.
    - b. Remember, don't substitute any other medication for the acetaminophen: don't take ibuprofen, aspirin, or any other over the counter medication in place of the acetaminophen. It must be acetaminophen for it to work as a team. Remember as well that acetaminophen is taken every 8 hours, the naproxen is twice a day. If you cannot tolerate
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naproxen, you may take 600 mg ibuprofen every 8 hours, in addition to acetaminophen 650 mg every 8 hours.

3. Occasionally (depending on your surgery), a prescription for hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/325 mg (Norco or similar) or a similar medication will be provided to assist with sleeping at night, and possibly every 6 hours during the day, **ONLY IF NEEDED**, for the first few days. Most patients find they do not need to take any or all of the Norco. Do not take the medication just because it was given to you; only take it if you need it. Remember that Norco is an opioid pain medication and can lead to addiction, respiratory sedation, and death. In 2015 over 17,500 Americans **died** from opioid overdoses and I don't want this to happen to you. Opioid medications can also cause constipation, so please plan for that, as well as possible mental confusion and drowsiness. Do not drive while you are taking this medication.

With this protocol, you can expect your post-operative pain to be very manageable. The worst pain only lasts for the first 48 hours and improves significantly after that. By the time you see your surgeon for your post-operative visit, you probably will no longer require any pain medication on a daily basis.

### **Important Information about Painkillers**

You may be prescribed an opioid pain medication to help with severe pain after surgery. Use the medication sparingly as needed to reduce your pain. The goal is not to be pain-free, but to make the pain more tolerable. If you are able to take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), alternate the prescription pain medication with over-the-counter Ibuprofen or Naproxen (if you do not have a history of liver disease, kidney disease, reflux, or stomach ulcers). This will allow you to take less opioid medication. Also, elevate the hand to reduce swelling and consider applying ice to the affected area for 15 minutes at a time, several times per day. Ice should not be applied directly to the skin, but with a towel in between and for no more than 15 minutes at a time.

Opioid medication is powerful and has the risk of overdose, abuse, and addiction. Only use the medication as directed by your physician and keep the pills in a safe place. When you no longer need the medication, please dispose of the pills properly as directed below. Allowing someone else to use your opioid prescription is illegal.

Also, possible side effects from opioid medications are over-sedation, itching, nausea/vomiting, and constipation. Do not drive a vehicle or operate machinery while taking the pain medications. Drink plenty of fluids and consider a stool softener to prevent constipation.

If the pain you are experiencing is not severe, stop taking the opioid pills and only take over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol and Ibuprofen.

Disposing of unused pain medication:

1. Follow pharmacist instructions on the bottle if available, or
2. Call 1-800-882-9539 for a DEA authorized collection site in your area