



# PAIN MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

*for Post-Surgical Patients*

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GUIDELINES



As of January 2019, Roswell Park is following new post-surgical pain management guidelines. The guidelines were developed through extensive research and consultation with experts from many different disciplines in order to promote the best possible recovery and quality of life for our patients.

**This fact sheet was created to help answer your questions.** For more information, including a video that describes the new guidelines and our approach to post-surgical pain care, visit [RoswellPark.org/pain-service](http://RoswellPark.org/pain-service).

### WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE NEW GUIDELINES?

Cancer-related pain can be debilitating – and must be addressed appropriately. The new guidelines are being implemented to make sure the amounts and kinds of medication we prescribe for our surgical patients are appropriate, safe and promote optimal recovery without putting our patients at risk for chronic opioid use and misuse. Our ultimate goal is to minimize your pain after surgery while not harming you by providing pain medications that may slow down your recovery.

Opioids have many side effects, including nausea, constipation, sluggishness and dizziness, so it's important for care providers everywhere to explore alternatives that might be equally effective without serious side effects that can get in the way of healing and well-being. The guidelines will help us to decrease unnecessary patient suffering from these side effects while maintaining the best possible pain control.

### WHAT ARE THE NEW GUIDELINES?

The guidelines advise decreasing the amount of opioid pills prescribed to surgical patients post-surgery, depending on their recovery and the type of surgery. Post-surgical patients will be prescribed an average of a zero- to three-day supply as a starting point. Our patients' care teams have full discretion on the prescription and can increase opioids if needed, and all our surgical patients have the opportunity to request additional pain control.



## WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES BASED ON?

The guidelines are based on scientific evidence – research that shows that minimizing the number of opioids prescribed following surgery not only reduces the chance of opioid misuse but actually promotes optimal recovery by reducing the chance of unnecessary side effects that may slow a patient's recovery. Our new post-surgical pain management guidelines were developed through extensive research and consultation with experts from many different disciplines. A two-year study by a multidisciplinary team of surgeons and other cancer specialists found that the amount of opioid medications prescribed after surgery can be drastically reduced without negatively affecting pain scores, postoperative complications or patient requests for additional opioids, demonstrating that alternative approaches to pain management can be both safe and highly effective.

## DOES THIS AFFECT PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC PAIN CAUSED BY THEIR CANCER OR CANCER TREATMENT?

No. The new guidelines will impact care for surgical patients only and will not affect pain management for those with cancer-related or chronic pain.

## COULD THIS HARM PATIENTS WHO NEED ADDITIONAL PAIN CONTROL?

No. The guidelines are a starting point only, not a cap or limit. They will not affect those with cancer-related or chronic pain. Our patients' care teams have the discretion to adjust medications to address their individual needs, and all our surgical patients will have the opportunity to request additional pain control. We will continue to provide attentive, appropriate and personalized care and pain management to all our patients, including those who are dealing with chronic pain due to their disease.

## DOES POST-SURGICAL OPIOID USE INCREASE MY CHANCES OF BECOMING ADDICTED?

Research studies have shown that some patients undergoing surgery who are prescribed opioids post-surgery may be at increased risk of becoming chronic users of opioid painkillers. Given the opioid addiction epidemic in our country, healthcare professionals have an obligation to closely monitor the opioid prescriptions of their patients and to refrain from overprescribing medications that may lead to new addiction or end up in the hands of an addict or someone looking to illegally sell these powerful drugs. Furthermore, at Roswell Park, we always consider alternative types of pain management in order to reduce the unpleasant side effects of pain medications that may impede the overall recovery of our patients.

## WHAT ARE NON-OPIOID ALTERNATIVES TO PAIN MANAGEMENT THAT CAN CONTROL PAIN FOR BOTH SURGICAL AND CHRONIC PAIN PATIENTS?

The Cancer Pain Management Service (CPMS) at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center uses a team approach to reducing pain in cancer patients. The expertise of anesthesiologists, psychologists, nurses, physical and occupational therapists, nutritionists and social workers merges into a comprehensive pain management plan designed to meet the individual needs of each patient. The CPMS offers a variety of medical and invasive pain management techniques, as well as biofeedback, relaxation training and physical therapy. Newer therapies, such as anti-neuropathic pain medication, IV ketamine therapy, steroid injections in the epidural space, intrathecal therapy with opioids/bupivacaine/clonidine and peripheral nerve stimulation have resulted in successful treatment of most patients.

## WHAT IF I HAVE SURGERY AND NEED MORE PAIN CONTROL?

Following your surgery, you will be discharged home with the appropriate amount of pain medication that is expected to adequately control your post-surgical pain. However, if at any time your pain control is not excellent and you have concerns or questions about your pain level, you should immediately call your care team to adjust your pain control medication accordingly.

## WE ARE HERE FOR YOU 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.



having pain



call us



speak to a nurse



adjust pain meds

**You are encouraged to call your care center during the business hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. To reach our Nurse Triage team anytime outside of these hours at 716-845-2300.**