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PAIN MEDICATION AND CONSTIPATION – POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

As you are probably aware narcotic pain medications are both addictive and have multiple side effects including nausea, vomiting, confusion, constipation and mood changes.

Although they are necessary for a short time after surgery it is our goal for you to get off these medications and transition to non-narcotic pain medications like tramadol (which you have also been given a prescription for if not allergic) or over the counter medications like Tylenol, Aleve or ibuprofen as soon as possible.

Also because of changes in state law we can only prescribe a maximum of 60 narcotic pills at the time of surgery and a second additional prescription 1 to 2 weeks later for sixty pills. This second prescription is ONLY if needed. No additional prescriptions can be given.

Some guidelines to help...

1. Do NOT take narcotic medications around the clock... take them only when absolutely necessary and don't just keep taking more if the prescribed dose isn't helping. One or two pills every 4 to 6 hours is the MAXIMUM dose but this is absolutely NOT the recommended dose. We want you to take much less than this dose and to wean off the medications as soon as possible. Start weaning off by taking the pain medications just 3 times per day, then just morning and night then just at night time until finally stopping them altogether and transitioning to Tramadol or Tylenol/Aleve/ibuprofen.
2. Use non medication techniques such as meditation, massage, acupuncture on the palm of the hand or sole of the foot to help control pain. Distract yourself by reading a book or watching a movie. Perform 5 minutes of eyes closed slow deep breathing. Have a good conversation with a friend or relative. All of these help greatly to control pain and distract the brain.

Being constipated will worsen your pain and makes you feel bad so DON'T LET IT HAPPEN. The combination of taking pain medications and being inactive can really cause difficulties moving your bowels. Here is how to avoid it:

1. We ask every patient to use at a minimum Miralax one capful twice a day beginning the morning after surgery

2. In addition to the Miralax don't get dehydrated... drink lots of water as well as fruit juices such as prune, pear or apple juice that promote bowel movement
3. Another great product is "smooth move" which is a hot tea you can find at most supermarkets, it really works!
4. If the above is not working and you have not had a bowel movement in 48 hours after surgery move right away to the big guns like oral Dulcolax pills, Dulcolax suppositories, milk of magnesia or as a last resort a bottle of magnesium citrate.

All of the products listed above are over the counter and do not require a prescription. Once you are certain your bowel movements are back on normal schedule you can stop the medications and juices. Also obviously stop these if you experience diarrhea.