

Pain Management Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



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1. *What is pain management?*

Pain is a complex medical problem that can have profound effects on your physical and mental well being. The goal of pain management is to help you decrease your level of pain and suffering, to return you to your maximum level of functioning and independence, and to help restore your quality of life.

2. *What is a pain medication agreement?*

Your health and safety is our primary concern. The pain medication agreement outlines important safety and regulatory issues concerning proper medical use of controlled substances. Among other expectations, we stress the use of one pharmacy and one physician for all of your pain medication prescriptions. We require you to take your medications as prescribed and submit urine specimens for testing on a regular basis. If you are impaired in any way, you must not drive or operate machinery. You cannot give or sell your medications to others, or take someone else's medications. These and other concerns are a part of our agreement necessary to safely prescribe opioids and/or other controlled substances for the management of pain.

3. *What is the difference between acute and chronic pain?*

Acute pain is short of duration, usually as a result of an injury, surgery or illness. Chronic pain is an ongoing condition, one which has been present for 6 months or longer. Your physician may refer you to a pain management specialist because your chronic pain condition has not responded to conventional therapies. With proper treatment, people may live full, normal lives after having experienced chronic pain.

4. *What is an epidural steroid injection?*

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Epidural injections are performed to confirm a diagnosis and/or reduce pain and inflammation. During the procedure, a physician uses x-ray / fluoroscopy and contrast solution to ensure a correct needle tip placement. Intravenous sedation may be used for patient relaxation

5. *What is the goal of a steroid injection?*

The injection consists of steroid-anesthetic mixture. Steroids are a powerful anti-inflammatory medication. If your symptomology is caused by inflammation, steroids will help to reduce the pain.

6. *Are the injections painful?*

You may experience pain, but only for short period of time. Local anesthetic and intravenous sedation can be used to reduce pain and provide relaxation. It is very important for you to be awake throughout the procedure to inform the physician about the sensations you are experiencing.

7. *How long will my injection take?*

Most procedures take 5 to 10 minutes. Some of them require half an hour. Preparation and recovery time may require 2 to 3 hours of your time.

8. *Can I return to work after pain management procedure?*

It depends on type of procedure. If you were working before the procedure you would be able to return to work the next day.

9. *Am I able to drive after a pain management procedure?*

Many of the procedures that are performed here may cause associated numbness, weakness, and/or loss of position sense, which can make the operation of a motor vehicle difficult. We do ask that you have a ride home.

10. *May I eat before a pain management procedure?*

You may eat prior to the procedure, however in many cases an empty stomach is preferable. Some patients feel sickness because of discomfort or agitation. Also, intravenous sedation can increase risk for vomiting and aspiration. You may take your regular medications with small amount of water.

11. *What kind of result can I expect following the injection?*

Steroid effects usually begin within 2 to 3 days, however pain relief may occur faster or slower.

Residual pain may be experienced for 1 to 2 days until the medication absorbs. Some patients require 2 or 3 injections to obtain the full relief.

12. *How many injections can I have?*

As a general rule, we restrict steroid injections to 3 injections for each 6-month period for any given area. If you are a diabetic, we will adjust this accordingly.

13. *What if the injection doesn't work for me?*

We will see you back in the office for follow-up to review your response to the injection and discuss further treatment options. Statistically, you have an approximately 75 to 80 % chance for significant pain relief. Determining factors include the severity of underlying process and age of the patient.