WHEN SHOULD I BEGIN TAKING MY OPIOID PAIN MEDICATION?

Pain medication should be taken for severe pain as needed, but only if pain is not controlled with nonopioid medication (painkillers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen).

If you need opioids for severe pain, take them as prescribed on the medication’s bottle.

HOW MANY SHOULD I TAKE AT ANY GIVEN TIME?

To figure out how many pills you should take, read the instructions on the medication’s bottle or the instructions given to you by your health care provider.

CAN I TAKE TYLENOL, ASPIRIN, OR ADVIL INSTEAD OF THIS MEDICATION OR WITH THIS MEDICATION?

Probably yes, but you should check with your health care provider.

Some prescribed pain medications combine acetaminophen with opioids. Taking additional acetaminophen with the prescribed combination pain medication could be unsafe.

DO I NEED TO FINISH THE ENTIRE BOTTLE OF PILLS?

No, pain medication should be taken when needed and pain medication must be stopped when pain is controlled.

If your severe pain is under control, there is no need to finish the bottle.

WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THE PILLS THAT ARE LEFTOVER?

Leftover pills should not be left in your home where someone else can take them.

There are facilities that will take these leftover medications. Check with your health care provider.

CAN I GIVE THESE PAIN MEDICATIONS TO FAMILY MEMBERS?

No, medications should never be shared with a family member or anyone else.

If you have any pills leftover, check with your health care provider or take them to a facility that will get rid of them safely.


**ABOUT THE AAO-HNS/F**

The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) represents approximately 12,000 specialists worldwide who treat the ear, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The AAO-HNS Foundation works to advance the art, science, and ethical practice of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery through education, research, and lifelong learning.