



Tapering Opioids Before Surgery

Do you live with chronic pain?
Are you using opioid pain medications?
Do you plan to have surgery?



If you answered "yes" to these questions, experts recommend reducing or stopping your use of opioid pain medicine before surgery.

While it may be challenging, tapering your use of opioid medications before surgery can help:

- Improve your recovery time
- Reduce the number of short-term opioids you need after surgery
- Lower your risk of post-surgical complications
- Decrease your chances of needing hospitalization after surgery
- Lower medical costs
- Reduce the likelihood of developing or worsening chronic pain after surgery

Taper safely

Talk to your healthcare provider about your opioid use. They can help you taper your dosage slowly and safely over time and explore alternative strategies.

These strategies begin with self-management that you do, supported by medical treatments, including physical therapy, over-the-counter pain medications (such as acetaminophen or NSAIDs), injections, certain antidepressants, and specific antiseizure medications, as needed, to enable you to participate in an active self-management program.

Self-management

Active self-management puts you in the driver's seat. Empowering you to take control. Helping you manage the pain and the suffering that often goes with it. Enhancing your ability to perform daily activities. And improving your overall quality of life.

Self-management includes:

- Day planning to schedule activities
- Education to better understand pain, reduce fear, and help you come to terms with it
- Relaxation techniques (such as deep belly breathing and mindfulness) to reduce stress and ease your body and mind



- Movement and exercise to build strength and endurance
- Participating in life to build social connections, purpose, and meaning
- Distraction to shift focus from the pain
- Modifying and moderating daily activities to make the most of your time and energy
- Lifestyle changes to improve diet and sleep
- Cognitive and behavioral strategies to alter unhelpful or self-limiting thoughts and behaviors

It takes time and work

Tapering and changing how you approach pain can be challenging, and it's natural to feel apprehensive about this transition.

However, it's important to remember that you're not alone in this journey. Your healthcare team is there to support you and refer you to a formal pain rehabilitation program or other resources if you need more help.

During the process, you might experience increased pain and withdrawal symptoms. However, many individuals report no increase in pain and, in some cases, even a decrease in pain, along with improved function and a better quality of life afterward.

Be patient with yourself throughout this journey. It's a marathon, not a sprint, and it requires dedication.

As the classic saying reminds us, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice." Over time, you'll notice small changes that can bring you encouragement and inspire hope for a brighter future.

You got this.