

Appropriate Use of Prescription Pain Medication

The use of prescription drugs to treat pain is something many people are prescribed at one time or other. If you are in pain, your health care provider will consider a variety of approaches. Strong pain relieving drugs, also known as narcotics, are needed to treat some health conditions but other non-narcotic prescription and non-prescription drugs may work for others. Your use of a pain medication as part of prescribed treatment under the watchful eye of your health care provider can be safe and effective. This is not considered prescription drug abuse.

It is important to be informed about your medication, so ask your provider about the risks and benefits of use. Communication is the key to ensuring that you receive treatment that is most appropriate for your current medical needs and that you use the medication in a safe and effective manner.

Although dependence on a pain-relieving drug for a medical condition will occur after approximately two weeks of use, this does not mean you are addicted. However, you may need to have the dose decreased over time to avoid some of the negative effects of stopping use.

If a physician prescribes pain medication for you for a medical condition:

- ✚ DISPOSE OF ALL PILLS NOT TAKEN DURING THE COURSE OF TREATMENT
- ✚ CONTACT YOUR PHYSICIAN IF PAIN SUBSIDES AND THE USE OF THE MEDICATION NO LONGER SEEMS NECESSARY. (Pain medications are for comfort during a painful illness or after a pain-causing injury or medical procedure. If the pain is no longer present, you may be advised to dispose of the remaining medication.)
- ✚ TAKE THE MEDICATION AS PRESCRIBED. Some medications take up to 30 minutes to enter your bloodstream and begin to work. Avoid the temptation to double the dose for a faster effect.
- ✚ DO NOT SHARE YOUR PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION WITH OTHERS.

Prescription pain medications are appropriate and necessary for the treatment of a variety of physical conditions. You should not be ashamed to share your symptoms with your health care provider so you can receive appropriate treatment. Communication with your physician and taking medications only as prescribed are the keys to safe use.

For additional information on health issues in Kentucky, contact your local County Extension Office or visit the HEEL website at: www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL

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