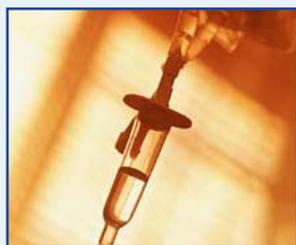


HOSPITAL  
FOR  
**SPECIAL  
SURGERY**



# Pain Management FAQ's





### ***3. How long does it take for PCA (Patient Controlled Analgesic) or pain pills to start working? How long does each last?***

**A.** Generally, after pushing the button on the PCA, initial relief of discomfort can begin in as little as 5 minutes. The PCA medication kicks in quickly but usually lasts for only a few hours – a much shorter time period than oral pain pills. Oral pain pills dissolve in the stomach so they take between 30 to 45 minutes to start working from the time they are swallowed. Because these pills slowly dissolve in the stomach, they generally work to control pain for 3 to 4 hours at a time.

### ***4. How do I get my pain relief pills while in the hospital?***

**A.** All oral pain medications are ordered for patients on an “as needed” basis due to regulations. Pain medications are NOT distributed automatically by our staff. This means that each patient is responsible for asking for their pain medications throughout the day at scheduled times, or when you are experiencing an increase in pain. Your assigned nurse will be routinely checking your pain status throughout your stay here at HSS, but it is important that you keep on top of your pain medication and ask for it every 3 to 4 hours in the immediate period following your surgery. This will ensure that you are more comfortable throughout the entire day.

### ***5. What are the most common pain medications (pills) that are prescribed?***

**A.** The most common pain medications in pill form used here at HSS are Vicodin or Norco (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) and Percocet (oxycodone/acetaminophen). Depending on your pain level, both are very effective, and have few side effects. It is common that you may be started on one of these medications, and then changed onto another.

## ***6. How long will I be on pain medication?***

**A.** Generally, our patients are on pain medication for a few weeks. There is no exact timeframe, since everyone progresses at a different pace. Most patients find that they are taking their pain pills more often throughout the day for the first one to two weeks, then after some healing time and physical therapy, they require less frequent dosing, and eventually stop the pain medication at about 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

## ***7. What are the side effects of the pain medications?***

**A.** The most common side-effects of pain medications are: drowsiness, dizziness, light-headedness, nausea, vomiting, constipation, dry mouth, sweating, and itching. Most of these side-effects are mild, and can easily be controlled with medications while here at the hospital. A rash is NOT an expected side-effect, and may be an indication that you are allergic to the medication you are taking – if this happens, please tell your doctor or hospital staff (RN) immediately.

## ***8. Will I become addicted to the pain medications?***

**A.** It is very rare that patients will become addicted to pain medications following their surgery. Long term use (many weeks to months) may increase your risk of getting used to a current dose of medication so that it is no longer enough to control your pain and you would need to increase the dose in order to get pain relief. Almost all patients undergoing routine orthopedic surgery need pain medications for only a short time, therefore the risk of dependence or addiction is very low.