

MEDICATION CATEGORIES

NSAIDS

ASA / Acetylsalicylic Acid (Aspirin)
Ibuprofen / (Motrin or Advil)
Naprosyn (Aleve)
Nabumetone (Relafen)
Celecoxib (Celebrex)

Anti-convulsants

Gabapentin (Neurontin)
Pregabalin (Lyrica)
Topiramate (Topamax)
Zonisamide (Zonegran)
Carbamazepine (Tegretol)

Anti-depressants

Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
Fluoxetine (Prozac)
Venlafaxine (Effexor)
Bupropion (Wellbutrin)
Escitalopram oxalate (Lexapro)
Citalopram HCL (Celexa)
Nortriptyline (Pamelor)
Amitriptyline (Elavil)
Issue XI

Muscle Relaxants

Lioresal (Baclofen)
Tizanidine (Zanaflex)
Methocarbamol (Robaxin)
Metaxalone (Skelaxin)
Cyclobenzprin (Flexeril)
Carisoprodol (Soma)

Opiates

Morphine (Avinza, Kadian, MS Contin)
Oxycodone (Oxycontin, Percocet, Endocet)
Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab)
Fentanyl (Duragesic)
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)
Propoxyphene (Darvocet)
Methadone

Other

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
Lidocaine (Lidoderm)
Ultram (Tramadol)

LIVING HEALTHY WITH CHRONIC PAIN



PHARMACOLOGY

differentiating pain medications



MAPS MEDICAL PAIN CLINICS | DAVID M. SCHULTZ, M.D. | MEDICAL DIRECTOR
2104 NORTHDAL BLVD. NW, SUITE 220 | MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55433
(763) 537-6000 | (763) 537-6666 FAX | (800) 775-PAIN TOLL-FREE | WWW.PAINPHYSICIANS.COM

MEDICATIONS

TO HELP CONTROL YOUR PAIN

By Anne Trujillo, CNP

Anti-Inflammatories

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) are often the first medication taken to treat pain. There are many NSAIDs available over the counter and some that are only available by prescription. Prescription NSAIDs are not always superior to over the counter NSAIDs, and in some cases are identical. NSAIDs are quite useful for treating any condition that is characterized by inflammation. For instance, herniated or bulging discs may cause inflammation around nerves. By decreasing inflammation, pain is often lowered or relieved. NSAIDs taken daily have some significant risks. They may lead to a bleeding ulcer or kidney problems. It is a common misconception that over the counter medications are safer than prescription medications. NSAIDs, while powerful and effective, must be evaluated for potential complications or side effects. Please let your health care provider know how you take all over the counter medications. Oral steroids are also an anti-inflammatory. Unfortunately, the potential side effects to chronic oral steroids are many. This makes us quite cautious about using them for chronic pain.

Anti-convulsants

Anti-convulsants are a category of medications that are used to treat pain by decreasing nerve sensitivity. They are referred to as “anti-convulsants” because they are also used in other practices to treat seizure disorders. Both neuropathic (nerve) pain and seizure disorders are characterized by overactive nerve signals. Calming down the transmission of a pain signal created by a nerve can reduce pain. (This can be more effective than just “covering up” the pain by taking an opioid) Examples of nerve pain include

pain shooting down an arm or leg from the neck or back, peripheral neuropathy (pain in the hands or feet sometimes related to diabetes) and post-shingles pain. Several other conditions may also respond to anti-convulsant treatment such as migraine headaches or fibromyalgia.

Anti depressants

Anti-depressants are often prescribed for patients in pain not only to combat a depressed mood, but also to increase substances in the brain that can make pain tolerance better. They may sometimes be prescribed for patients with pain who are not depressed. The way they treat pain is not precisely known, however it is thought to be related to their effect on neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine or dopamine. Some patients feel that if they are prescribed an antidepressant to treat their pain that their health care provider must feel that their pain is “all in their head”. This is not the case! Some patients find anti-depressants more effective for pain management than opioid medications.

Muscle Relaxants

Several painful disorders are accompanied by tight or spasmed muscles. On occasion, muscle relaxants may be prescribed. For chronic daily pain, muscle relaxants may be most beneficial when combined with other forms of treatment such a physical therapy or biofeedback. Some muscle relaxants may be habit forming (carisoprodol/ Soma, diazepam/ Valium), while others are safer to use longer term (tizanadine/Zanaflex, baclofen/Lioresal).

Opioids

Opioids, also known as narcotics, alter a person’s perception of pain. They are typically prescribed for acute (short term) pain, such as postoperative pain, or pain from an accident. Acute pain is normally accompanied by a period of healing from the injury or surgery. Altering the feeling of pain while the body is healing is generally well accepted within the medical community. A more controversial use of opioids is using them to treat chronic (long term) pain. Longer term use of opioids may cause complications, such as tolerance to the effects of the drug or addiction.

Other

Tylenol (acetaminophen) is a very effective analgesic (pain reliever). It is known that combining acetaminophen with other medications may make them more effective. Always review the daily total of acetaminophen in combination drugs to make sure that the daily Tylenol dose does not exceed 4000mg. Lidocaine patches or ointment is a very well tolerated topical pain reliever. This medication numbs the area of pain and does not cause many side effects. It is particularly useful for areas of localized pain, but may be used for many conditions from spine, muscle or nerve pain to pelvic pain. Finally, tramadol/Ultram is an opioid-like pain reliever. Since it works in the body so similarly to an opioid, it has a lot of similar side effects and risks of addiction.

Most patients living with chronic daily pain have tried several medications in an effort to relieve their symptoms. Taking medications can be frustrating. They can be costly, cause side effects or can sometimes not help. In order to help patients make informed decisions about taking pain medications, this issue of Living Healthy with Chronic Pain describes the basic principles of medication management. The most common general categories of medications prescribed to treat pain are:

- Opioids (narcotics)
- Anti-convulsants
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-inflammatories
- Muscle relaxants
- Other

