



Handout 1: Talking with Your Healthcare Provider

What Your Healthcare Provider Will Want to Know about Your Pain History

1. When did your pain start? What brings on your pain?
2. How long does your pain last? Does your pain come and go, or is it there all the time?
3. Where is your pain located? Does it move to other parts of your body?
4. What makes it better? What makes it worse?
5. How has your pain affected your mood and daily activities?
6. What words would you use to describe your pain; for example: burning, prickling, tingling, sharp, dull, stabbing, aching?
7. What have you tried to relieve your pain? Include prescription and over-the-counter drugs, as well as non-medicine treatments (meditation, acupuncture, etc.).
8. Are there any other symptoms with your pain?
9. What are your goals for pain relief and daily activity?
10. If you are taking any medicines, tell your healthcare provider the following:
 - The names of your medicines. Be sure to include any prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as herbal remedies.
 - How long you have been taking them.
 - How well they work.
 - How much you take and how often.
 - Any bad reactions or side effects, such as increased drowsiness, dry mouth, rash, or other reactions.

What Your Healthcare Provider Should Be Telling You

Safe and effective pain management must include clear and accurate information for patients about what the treatment includes, the expected results, and any dangers related to use of the prescribed medications, especially opioid pain relievers. The information should include the following:

- An overview of prescription and over-the-counter pain relievers, including what can and cannot be taken together.
- Specific instructions on use and misuse of pain relievers, including signs of possible addiction or related problems.
- Explanations of where to find professionals who will help them learn to be as healthy, high-functioning, and well-adjusted as possible, while living with daily pain that may be only partially relieved by medical treatments.

Ask Your Healthcare Provider

Working with your healthcare provider to understand and treat pain safely and effectively is the best way to approach pain. Ask the following questions, so that you fully understand your pain and any medications prescribed to treat it:

1. What is causing my pain? What can I do about it?
2. Will you be treating my pain, the causes of my pain, or both?
3. What is the name of the pain medicine I will be taking? Why am I taking it?
4. How long will it take for the medicine to work?
5. What side effects should I expect? Should I report them to you?
6. If I forget to take the pain medicine, what should I do?
7. When should I take the pain medicine—on a regular schedule? Before, with, or after meals? At bedtime?
8. Are there any dangers to taking this pain medicine I should know about?
9. Will this pain medicine cause problems with any other prescription drugs or over-the-counter medicines I'm taking?
10. Is it possible to treat my chronic pain without medications?

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