

A



Health Services
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

pain after surgery

After surgery, *some pain is normal*. Surgeons can give you prescription pain medicine (opioids*) to control pain after surgery. We are very careful with these pills because they have been shown to be addictive, can cause you harm, and even cause overdose if used incorrectly.

opioids* include morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and hydromorphone

do expect some pain and soreness in first 1-3 days

do continue walking and light activity

do take opioids for **severe** pain if non-opioids are not sufficient

do take non-opioids every 4-6 hrs for pain, including:

- acetaminophen, Tylenol, paracetamol
- ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil
- ice or warm packs for relief

do safely throw away opioids

do not take ibuprofen if you have:

- stomach ulcers
- bleeding disease
- kidney disease

do not drink alcohol or drive when taking opioids

do not use opioids for non-surgery pain



Safe medication disposal
- See reverse side ►►

B

Unused or expired pills should be returned to take-back sites (<https://takebackdva.dea.gov>) that include sheriff stations and/or select pharmacies. If the take-back option is not available, follow instructions below. If all else fails, flush the pills down the toilet.



1. Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.



2. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.



3. Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag.



4. Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number, on the empty containers by covering it with permanent marker or duct tape, or by scratching it off.



5. The sealed container with the drug mixture, and the empty drug containers, can now be placed in the trash.

FIGURE 1. Postoperative infographic discharge instructions. The front side (A) discusses postoperative pain expectations and instructions on appropriate opioid and nonopioid analgesic medication usage. The back side (B) contains instructions on Food and Drug Administration-approved method of disposing unused opioids.