



Common Myths About Narcotic Use

Myth:

Giving morphine or other opioids on a regular basis will turn the person into an addict.

Fact:

Opioids are highly addictive drugs. However, when used to manage physical pain under the care of a physician, it is possible to take the medication without becoming addicted. Keeping a steady low dose of pain killer in the body reduces the roller coaster ride of a large dose being introduced, waiting for it to wear off, introducing another large dose and then waiting again. When used in a medical setting with a continuous administration, addiction is well below the rate within the general population.

Myth:

If you use morphine now, it won't work later when your pain is worse.

Fact:

Morphine and other opioids are given in doses appropriate for the level of pain at the time. As pain increases, the amount of the drug may also need to be increased or the drug changed. The increased dosage is reflective of the increase in pain, not in the decrease of effectiveness of the drug.

Myth:

Narcotics can only be given for so long.

Fact:

Morphine and other narcotics are usually given in the last few days or weeks of life. However, there are some cases where the pain level is very high long before the end of life (months or even years). When prescribed, administered and taken appropriately, these drugs can be effective for several years.