Opioid Pain Reliever Fact Sheet

What are opioid pain relievers?
- Opioid pain relievers are narcotic medications that reduce pain
- Some commonly prescribed opioids include oxycodone, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, codeine

Side effects
- Drowsiness, constipation, dry mouth, nausea, itching, dry skin, confusion, muscle twitching, sweating, fatigue, weakness, difficulty urinating and mild headache

Risks
- Opioids can slow reaction time which can increase the risk of accidents
- Addiction to opioids rarely happens when they taken as prescribed for short term surgical pain
- Opioids can lead to fatal overdose which is more likely if you combine opioids with alcohol or other drugs such as Xanax, Ativan or Valium

What are the signs of a problem with opioid pain relievers?
- Are you taking more than prescribed?
- Are you having trouble controlling your use?
- Are you experiencing confusion or excessive sleepiness?
- If you experiencing any of these symptoms, please notify your surgeon’s office right away

Safety education
- Prescriptions for opioids cannot be faxed into your pharmacy and need to be picked up in person at the clinic
- It is ok to take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Aleve) while taking opioid pain relievers; but please check with your surgeon before taking ibuprofen as this may increase the risk of bleeding.
- Never take an opioid pain reliever unless it is prescribed for you
- Only take opioids as they are needed and not just because it was prescribed
- Always keep track of how much and when you are taking your medicines
- Protect and lock up your opioids keeping them in a safe place at all times
- Never chew, crush or dissolve opioid tablets unless specifically instructed to do so by your health care provider
- Dispose of unused medication at drop boxes in approved disposal locations, such as police station or local pharmacy. Or mix with coffee grounds or kitty litter before disposing in trash
- If you experience signs of overdose such as severe drowsiness, difficulty breathing or are unable to wake up call 911 immediately as this is an emergency

Do not drink alcohol, drive or operate machinery while taking these medications.