Maine Spine Surgery
Narcotic Medication Policy

Maine Spine Surgery is a surgical practice. As such, we will provide appropriate post-operative treatment of pain that may include the use of medications including narcotics. Narcotic medications have the potential to be dangerous or deadly. Narcotics are associated with side effects including drowsiness, constipation, impairment of judgment, serious breathing difficulties, and death. They must not be taken when driving or in other potentially dangerous situations. Narcotics also have the potential to be addicting and are frequently abused. Maine has one of the highest rates of drug abuse in the country. Prescribers are being monitored carefully by state and federal authorities.

Narcotics are but one avenue of pain therapy and never represent the sole method of pain control. It is likely we will use other methods of pain control and will reserve narcotic medication for when it is clearly indicated. Narcotic therapy is not a “patient right”.

Prescribing Guidelines, Patient Responsibilities, Expectations:

a. Narcotic medications will only be prescribed in the post-operative period. The longest time we will prescribe narcotics will be 4-6 weeks, and most patients will require a much shorter period of treatment.

b. Patients with chronic pain issues who are treated elsewhere with narcotic therapy should maintain their relationships with their prescribing provider (e.g., PCP, pain specialist). Management of chronic pain is beyond the scope of Maine Spine Surgery. Once the usual period of post-operative pain is over, any further prescriptions must be obtained from the previously prescribing provider.

c. Under no circumstances will prescriptions be refilled or ordered outside of our normal business hours. Please give 48 hours notice of the need for a refill. Calling for a refill of medications does not guarantee a refill, as another method of pain control may be instituted. Many medications cannot be called in to a pharmacy, so time must be allowed for pickup or mailing of prescriptions.

d. There will be no alcohol or illicit drug use while taking narcotic medications. Discovery of such via internal or external sources may result in immediate discontinuation of narcotics.

e. Driving or operating machinery while taking narcotics may result in injury or death. If the patient elects to drive a vehicle, or to operate machinery or other equipment, he or she does so at his/her own risk of injury or death.

f. Lost prescriptions or medications will not be replaced. Stolen prescriptions or medications may be replaced at the discretion of the practice, and only after a police report is provided to our office.
g. Upon request of our practice, the patient will immediately submit a urine sample to a designated laboratory for testing to assure the medications being prescribed are actually in the urine.

h. A pill count may be requested, and the patient must bring in the medications that day to be counted by our staff. For patients out of town, it is acceptable to have a local pharmacist perform a pill count and we will call the pharmacist to verify.

i. If we find that you are receiving medication from another provider that we were not aware of, we will no longer prescribe.

j. Changing or altering a narcotic prescription, selling, trading, lending, or borrowing of narcotics is illegal. These events are felonies under federal law and are not protected by the patient-doctor professional relationship. Any information we receive regarding such acts will be reported to the police or US Drug Enforcement Agency.

Reasons for which narcotics may be stopped immediately include but are not limited to:

- evidence of prescription alteration or fraud, or solid evidence presented to our clinic that the patient has been selling narcotics
- any inappropriate use or diversion of medication
- threat of legal action or violence made against any of our staff in order to obtain medications. In such cases, the police will be called immediately to report felony drug diversion or attempted extortion, and the patient will be immediately discharged from our practice.
- refusal to take a urine drug screen in an appropriate time frame
- refusal to bring in medications for a pill count when requested
- a positive drug test for illicit drug use or narcotics not prescribed by our practice
- a negative urine drug screen for narcotics we are prescribing
- external source confirmation of “doctor shopping” or obtaining narcotics from multiple physicians simultaneously
- impairment of the patient to such a degree that it is the opinion of our practice that the patient poses a risk to themselves or to others
- arrest for driving while impaired, arrest for any alcohol-related offence

Your health and safety is our primary concern. Thank you for taking the time to read this policy and please let us know if you have any questions concerning this policy.