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CRANIAL SURGERY
MICRONEUROSURGERY
SPINAL INSTRUMENTATION

NARCOTIC WARNING

Pain relievers are often divided into two groups, non-narcotic and narcotic. Narcotics are illegal (street drugs) or legal (prescription medications) derived from or chemically related to opium. Narcotic medications are often dispensed with warnings from the pharmacy because of their potential for tolerance or addiction.

Tolerance means the body adjusts (or gets used) to the medication. When this happens, it takes increasingly larger doses to have a constant effect. As a result of tolerance, the body becomes addicted to the drug, meaning that its sudden withdrawal causes unwanted side effects. **All** narcotics (illegal and legal) have the potential to cause tolerance and addiction.

The term “narcotic” comes from the Greek word for stupor. In addition to their pain relieving abilities, narcotics dull the senses and can cause drowsiness, stupor, dulled reflexes and errors in judgment. Therefore, anyone, including patients prescribed legal narcotic pain relievers, is advised to avoid activities that can put themselves or others at risk because of these effects. These include, but are not limited to, driving, climbing, operating dangerous equipment, making important decisions, etc. while taking narcotic medications.

Other non-narcotic medications can affect judgment, cause drowsiness, etc. Because they have similar side effects to narcotics, patients are advised to avoid the same activities as when using narcotic medications. Therefore, it is **very** important that all patients read and understand the warnings dispensed with the prescription and non-prescription medications. Also, combinations of these medications can increase their side effects making the combination even more dangerous.

The illegal use of narcotics is considered “narcotic abuse.” This includes the use of illegal narcotic drugs and the illegal or improper use of prescription narcotics. Medication abuse also includes the improper or illegal use of non-narcotic mind altering medications. The social use of medications because of their side effects is always considered abuse. Narcotic and other medication abuse is a criminal offense and is governed by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

You have been given this warning because at least one of your medications can have mind-altering side effects. It is **your** responsibility to maintain your safety and those around you by following your medication directions and warnings.

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