Acute pain is the intense pain that happens in the immediate time period after an injury, and will go away as the injury heals. It can be treated by painkillers and alternative pain management.

**Chronic pain** is pain that lasts more than 3 months and can develop from an injury that doesn't heal properly or from repetitive wear and tear on your body. Chronic pain won't go away on its own, and needs treatment from a health professional.

Long-term management of chronic pain with painkillers alone isn't best practice. More info on treating and finding support for chronic pain is included on the back of this pamphlet.

Additional resources are available at www.vicabc.ca

### **Prescription Opioids**

Your healthcare provider may prescribe you opioids for pain management. Some common prescription opioids are Tylenol 3, Percocet, Oxycodone, Tramacet, Methadone, Morphine, Fentanyl, and Hydromorphone. Because of their side effects, including physical dependance and addiction, they are tightly regulated substances and should only be used when necessary.

Not everyone who takes prescription opioids becomes physically dependent or experiences addiction. However, if you have a personal or family history of addiction, mental illness, or trauma you may be at a higher risk and should share this information with your healthcare provider when discussing your care plan.

Use this space to take notes when speaking to your healthcare providers or when accessing any of the support lines

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# COPING WITH AN INJURY ON & OFF THE JOBSITE

Being injured, in pain, and off work can be extremely challenging.

Depending on your injury and/or past injuries you may be experiencing acute or chronic pain, or both.

This pamphlet has some advice and resources to help you navigate the healing process and support both your mental and physical health.

### **Chronic Pain Management**

Pain is considered chronic if it lasts more than 3 months. If it's lasting that long, it likely won't go away without some form of healthcare intervention. There are several alternative treatments and approaches for managing chronic pain, many of which are covered by BC's Medical Services Plan (MSP) – meaning you won't have to pay out of pocket.

# To receive support and advice for alternative pain management strategies you can:

- Ask your doctor to assess your pain and recommend treatment.
- If you don't have a doctor (or if you're unable to see your doctor, don't have a good relationship with them, or ask and don't find them helpful), contact PainBC's Pain Support Line at 1-844-880-7246. They can recommend practitioners to you.
- If you have benefits through your employer or union start using them.
   Trying lots of therapies can help you find what works for you. Many benefits plans cover therapies like massage, physiotherapists, acupuncture, and counselling - all of which can be helpful in managing chronic pain.



# Some questions to ask your provider when discussing opioids are:

- How much pain relief should I expect from this medication?
- · Are there alternatives to opioids I could take?
- · How long should I take this medication?
- When will we have a follow-up appointment to discuss how I'm doing on this medication?

# If you and your health-care provider move forward with an opioid prescription here are some ways to reduce the risks/harms associated with opioids:

- Continuous use of opioids (in particular longer than 2 weeks) can lead to physical dependence because your body gets used to having a regular supply of the drug.
   Therefore, use opioids for as short a period as possible. Make a plan with your health-care provider for when you're ready to stop the medication; stopping your meds abruptly can cause you to experience withdrawal symptoms.
- Use the lowest dose possible to control your pain.
- Never take more of your meds or take them more frequently than advised by your health-care provider.
- Keep your meds in a secure place so that no one else can use them.
- Return unused medications to a pharmacy to ensure they're disposed of safely.
- If you find yourself wanting to take your meds more frequently than advised or for any other reason other than physical pain management speak to your health-care provider right away.

# Supporting Your Mental Health While You're Healing

Being injured takes a toll on our mental health. Your brain feels the effects of your body's pain, the healing process can be really frustrating, and being off work can strain you financially and socially.

# Putting a plan in place early can help support your mental health throughout the process. Some suggestions:

- Ask a friend if they can come by and hang out on a regular basis. Being home alone and in pain isn't a fun experience.
- See if anyone can organize a meal train for you so you know you'll have something good to eat!
- Take up or return to a hobby that you can do from whichever position you need to be in for recovery (e.g. From bed, or the couch).

If you're really struggling you can also call the Vancouver Island Crisis Line at 1-888-494-3888, or if you're Indigenous the Kuu-us Crisis Line at 1-800-588-8717.

If you find yourself using drugs and alcohol more than usual, consider coming to Hammer Time, a construction industry specific support group, on Zoom Thursdays at 7pm.

Zoom Meeting ID: 845 2308 9259 Passcode: 379893

Some information in this pamphlet was sourced from Health Canada's "Talking to Your Provider about Opioids" Guide.



