

## **MEDICAL GUIDELINES FOR ONGOING RECOVERY: What should a recovering person do in times of illness?**

### **Remember sound recovery principles:**

- Keep in **contact** with your support system--a recovery program **sponsor**, trusted **friends** in recovery, **supportive family** members.
- Maintain an **active recovery program** to avoid relapse.
- Go to as many **meetings** as possible before, during, and after the illness.
- Use recovery material such as **literature, recordings**, etc. to reinforce your recovery. If you are being hospitalized, take recovery books, recordings, etc. to the hospital with you.
- Use the **telephone!** Call supportive people.
- **Don't isolate** yourself; arrange for regular visitors.
- **Remember H.A.L.T.--don't get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired!**

### **Treat the underlying cause of the illness, not just the symptoms.**

**Use appropriate nonchemical or nonmedical treatments** for the illness/discomfort. For example: rest, relaxation techniques, massage, meditation, heat, ice, physical therapy, acupuncture, biofeedback, etc.

If nonchemical means of symptom relief are ineffective, first **use non-addicting medications**.

### **Avoid taking addicting medications.**

#### **When you consult a physician or other health care professional, remember:**

- It is **your responsibility** to tell your physician, dentist, or other professional that you are in recovery from addiction.
- **Explain** that you should not take addicting medications, and give your physician, dentist, or other health professional the handouts: **Medications to Avoid During Recovery** and **Medications and the Recovering Person**.
- Ask for an **explanation** of your illness and a **rationale** for the recommended treatment.
- Ask about any **reasonable and safe alternatives** to the recommended treatment.
- **Find out all you can about any prescribed medications**--the name of the medication and its side effects, potential for addiction, appropriate dosages, and length of treatment.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not take any of the medications on the list of **Medications to Avoid During Recovery**, or in Class A from **Medications and the Recovering Person**. If a Class A medication is recommended, ask why you need to take it and if there are safe alternatives.
- If any Class A medications are recommended, if you have questions about any medication's appropriateness during recovery, or if you have doubts about your recovery safety, **get another opinion from an addiction specialist physician**.
- Remember: **AA/NA members or other recovering persons should never advise you on medication treatment!!**

**If you must take an addicting medication** (for example, narcotics after major surgery), **follow these guidelines** as closely as possible:

- Take the medication **only** in the **hospital, clinic**, or under direct **medical supervision**, preferably working with an **addiction specialist**.
- **Take pain medication on a regular schedule, not on an as needed ("PRN") schedule.**
- Undergo a **medically supervised withdrawal** from medications, if needed.
- **Use your support system**--12-Step meetings or other support group, treatment, therapy, recovering friends, recovery literature, supportive family members, etc.--during and after taking addicting medications.
- If at all possible, **do not take any addicting medications home**.
- If you must take addicting medications home, ask your physician, dentist, or other prescriber to give you a **limited amount prescription with no refills**. Ask a trusted friend, family member, spouse, etc. to dispense the medication to you and to support you in taking medications as prescribed.
- When you are done with the treatment, **ask your pharmacy to destroy the unused medication**. Do not flush the medications; the pharmacy can destroy them in an environmentally responsible way.

If you, or your physician, dentist, or other prescriber need to consult an **addiction specialist physician**, the American Society of Addiction Medicine ([www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org) or 301-656-3920) and the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry ([www.aaap.org](http://www.aaap.org) or 401-524-3076) or your State's medical association can assist you with finding a specialist in your area.

Refer to Dr. Howell's website ([www.efhmd.medem.com/Howell](http://www.efhmd.medem.com/Howell)) if you, your family, or your physician, dentist, or other prescriber need more information about addiction, treatment, or recovery. The handouts **Medications to Avoid During Recovery** and **Medications and the Recovering Person** can be downloaded or read via this website.