10.5: Analgesic and Musculoskeletal Medications

As illustrated in the WHO ladder in Figure 10.8, analgesics used to treat pain are categorized as nonopioid, opioid, and adjuvant medications. Nonopioid medications include acetaminophen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). There are several types of opioids, as listed previously in Figure 10.7. Adjuvant analgesics are defined as drugs with a primary indication other than pain that have analgesic properties in some painful conditions. This group includes numerous drugs in diverse classes such as gabapentin (an anticonvulsant), amitriptyline (a tricyclic antidepressant), or muscle relaxants. Each of these classes will be discussed in more detail along with antigout medications and a brief overview of anesthetic medication.

Analgesic and Musculoskeletal Medication Classifications

Let’s take a closer look at different classes of analgesics and musculoskeletal medications with specific administration considerations, therapeutic effects, adverse/side effects, and teaching needed for each class of medications. Analgesic and musculoskeletal medications are available in many different forms, such as oral tablets, oral liquids, injections, inhalation, and transdermal. Some products contain more than one medicine (for example, oxycodone and acetaminophen) to enhance pain relief.