



KEEPING YOU AND YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS SAFE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Common types of opioids include: Hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin); Oxycodone (e.g., Oxycontin); Oxymorphone (e.g., Opana), and Morphine.

These prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury, or for certain health conditions. They can be an important part of treatment but also come with serious risks. It is important to work with your health care provider to make sure you are getting the safest, most effective care.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF OPIOID USE?

Prescription opioids carry serious risks of addiction and overdose, especially with prolonged use. An opioid overdose, often marked by slowed breathing, can cause sudden death. The use of prescription opioids can have a number of side effects as well, even when taken as directed:

- Tolerance—meaning you might need to take more of a medication for the same pain relief.
- Physical dependence—meaning you have symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped.
- Increased sensitivity to pain.
- Constipation.
- Nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth.
- Sleepiness and dizziness.
- Confusion.
- Depression.
- Low levels of testosterone that can result in lower sex drive, energy, and strength.
- Itching and sweating.

As many as 1 in 4 PEOPLE*
receiving prescription opioids
long term in a primary care
setting struggles with addiction.
* Findings from one study

RISKS ARE GREATER WITH:

- History of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose
- Mental health conditions (such as depression or anxiety)
- Sleep apnea
- Older age (65 years or older)
- Pregnancy

Avoid alcohol while taking prescription opioids. Also, unless specifically advised by your health care provider, medications to avoid include: • Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax or Valium) • Muscle relaxants (such as Soma or Flexeril) • Hypnotics (such as Ambien or Lunesta) • Other prescription opioids.

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Talk to your health care provider about ways to manage your pain that don't involve prescription opioids. Some of these options may actually work better and have fewer risks and side effects.

OPTIONS MAY INCLUDE:

Pain relievers such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen.

Some medications that are also used for depression or seizures.

Physical therapy and exercise.

Cognitive behavioral therapy, a psychological, goal-directed approach, in which patients learn how to modify physical, behavioral, and emotional triggers of pain and stress.

There is insufficient evidence that prescription opioids control chronic pain effectively over the long term, and there is evidence that other treatments can be effective with less harm.

IF YOU ARE PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS FOR PAIN:

Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed.

Follow up with your primary health care provider within an agreed number of days.

Work together to create a plan on how to manage your pain.

Talk about ways to help manage your pain that don't involve prescription opioids.

Talk about any and all concerns and side effects.

Help prevent misuse and abuse.

Never sell or share prescription opioids.

Never use another person's prescription opioids.

There is insufficient evidence that prescription opioids control chronic pain effectively over the long term, and there is evidence that other treatments can be effective with less harm.

Store prescription opioids in a secure place and out of reach of others (this may include visitors, contractors, children, friends, and family). If you are selling your home, open houses are targeted by thieves to obtain controlled substances.

Safely dispose of unused prescription opioids: find your community drug take-back program, your local pharmacy drug drop box or mail-back program, or visit:

<https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/meddrop/Pages/Locations.aspx>

If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, tell your health care provider and ask for guidance, or visit www.communityincrisis.org/need-help/

BE INFORMED!

Make sure you know the name of your medication, how much and how often to take it, and its potential risks & side effects.



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