



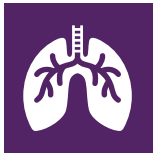
OPIOID SAFETY

How to take, store, and dispose of prescription pain medicine

Prescription opioids are used to relieve moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury. Used appropriately, opioids can be part of a safe, effective pain management regimen.



However, ALL opioids carry serious risks of addiction, overdose, and death, especially with prolonged or unprescribed use.



Opioid-related risks are greater if you are:

- ◆ Older age (65 years or older)
- ◆ Pregnant

Or if you have any of the following:

- ◆ Reduced kidney or liver function
- ◆ Conditions that affect breathing such as COPD, heart failure, or sleep apnea
- ◆ Mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety
- ◆ History of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose

Even when taken as directed, opioids may cause the following adverse effects:

- ◆ Tolerance (requiring more medication for the same relief)
- ◆ Dependence (physical symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped)
- ◆ Constipation, dry mouth, nausea, and vomiting
- ◆ Sleepiness, dizziness, memory problems, and confusion
- ◆ Itching, flushing, and sweating
- ◆ Depression, irritability, anxiety
- ◆ Sexual dysfunction
- ◆ Increased sensitivity to pain



Discuss questions and concerns with your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse, and make sure your healthcare providers know of any adverse effects you experience.

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Steps for Your Safety

Work with your primary healthcare provider to set realistic goals and expectations for pain. Create a personalized plan to manage your pain using more than just opioids.

Never drink alcohol while taking prescription opioids.

Unless specifically advised by your health care provider, avoid combining opioids with the following medications:

- ◆ Benzodiazepines (e.g., alprazolam (Xanax®), lorazepam (Ativan®))
- ◆ Muscle relaxants (e.g., carisoprodol (Soma®), cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril®))
- ◆ Sleeping pills (e.g., zolpidem (Ambien®))
- ◆ Other opioids



Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed, and never take opioids not prescribed to you.



Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about **naloxone** (Narcan), which can reverse the life-threatening effects of opioids in the event of an unexpected reaction or accidental ingestion.

If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, tell your healthcare provider or call 1-800-662-HELP.

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Keeping Others Safe

More than half of misused prescription pain relievers are obtained from a friend or relative. Prevent accidental or intentional misuse to keep your family, friends, and community safe.

Never share or sell prescription opioids. Store them in a secure place out of reach of children and visitors.

Disposal options for unused medicine:

- ◆ Drug take-back days in your community
- ◆ Drug disposal drop boxes in pharmacies or law enforcement facilities
- ◆ Flush opioids down the toilet. Mix all other types of medication with an unpleasant substance (e.g., coffee grounds) to discourage retrieval and throw away in your household trash.



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