

Safe Use of Opioids

What you need to know about Opioid Pain Medicines

What are opioids?

Opioids are strong prescription medicines that are used to manage moderate to severe pain.

What are some common opioids?

Hydrocodone (Vicodin[®], Lortab[®])

Oxycodone (Percocet[®], OxyContin[®])

Morphine (MS Contin[®], Kadian[®])

Codeine (Tylenol with codeine, Tylenol #3)

Fentanyl (Duragesic[®] patch)

Hydromorphone (Dilaudid[®])

Meperidine (Demerol[®])

Methadone (Dolophine[®])

What are the common side effects of opioids?

Constipation, Dizziness, Drowsiness, Nausea and Vomiting, Dry Mouth, and Itching.

What are serious side effects of opioids?

Respiratory Depression: Slow breathing or stopping breathing especially in cases of overdose.

Physical Dependence: If you take an opioid medicine for more than a few days, your body becomes physically dependent. This is normal and it means your body has gotten used to the medicine.

Addiction: When you crave opioid medicine because they make you feel good not because you have pain.

How can I take opioid pain medicine safely?

- Take your opioid medicine exactly as prescribed.
- Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbal supplements, and other over-the-counter medicines.
- Call your healthcare provider if the opioid medicine is not controlling your pain. Do not increase the dose on your own.
- Don't drive while taking opioids. Opioids can make you drowsy.
- Avoid drinking alcohol and using recreational drugs while taking opioids. Mixing opioids with alcohol or recreational drugs can have serious side effects such as trouble breathing.
- Do not share or give your opioid medicine to anyone else. Your healthcare provider selected this opioid and the dose just for you. A dose that is okay for you could cause an overdose and death for someone else.
- Store your opioid medicine in a safe place where it cannot be reached by children or stolen by family or visitors to your home.
- If you don't need them anymore, discard them.

How will I know if I am getting addicted to opioids?

Addiction is an uncontrolled urge to take opioids even if you don't have pain. Risk factors for addiction include:

- Personal or family history of substance use disorder.

- Medical conditions such as Depression or Anxiety.
- Age 65 or young, although anyone can develop an addiction to opioids.

If you have any concerns, talk to your healthcare provider right away.

What other options are there to help with my pain?

Opioids are not the only thing that can help you control your pain. Ask your healthcare provider if your pain might be helped with a non-opioid medication, physical therapy, exercise, rest, acupuncture, types of behavioral therapy, or patient self-help techniques.

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a medicine that treats opioid overdose. It is sprayed inside your nose.

Use naloxone and call 911 or go to the emergency room right away if:

- You or someone else has taken an opioid medicine and is having trouble breathing, is short of breath, or is unusually sleepy.
- A child has accidentally taken the opioid medicine, or you think they might have. Giving naloxone to a person, even a child, who has not taken an opioid medicine will not hurt them.

Where can I get naloxone?

Naloxone products are available for people to use in their homes. They are available in pharmacies.

- Ask your healthcare provider about how you can get naloxone.
- Free Naloxone is also available at USC Verdugo Hills Hospital emergency room.

Naloxone is never a substitute for emergency medical care. Always call 911 or go to the emergency room if you've used or given naloxone.

How should I dispose of the opioid medicine?

When you no longer need your opioid medicine, dispose of it as quickly as possible to avoid any possibility of abuse or misuse by anyone else.

Drop off your medicine at a drug take back site near you or use a pre-paid drug mail-back envelope which you can obtain from your pharmacy.

Locating a drug take back site near you:

Use the DEA website link and type in your zip code to see all drug take back locations near you.

[Every Day is Take Back Day | DEA.gov](https://www.dea.gov/everyday-takeback-day)

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