

PRESCRIPTION OPIOID:



What you Need to Know

Many of our members at Care N' Care are given at least one opioid prescription each year, and our nation's opioid crisis seems to be in the news nearly every day...

This article provides some key information on what you need to know about opioids. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC) has helpful materials for patients on this topic. To write this article, I took key items from a couple of these materials that I felt are important for all of our members to know about opioids. If you would like further information, I encourage you to visit the CDC's website at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients/materials.html>.

What are opioids?

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. These medications can be an important part of treatment but also come with serious risks.

It is important to work with your healthcare provider to make sure you are getting the safest and most effective care.

What are names of common opioid medications?

- Hydrocodone (Vicodin or Lortab)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin)
- Codeine
- Morphine
- Fentanyl

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

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

Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to manage your pain that doesn't involve prescription opioids.

What are medications or substances I should avoid or ask my doctor if I can take with opioids?

- Alcohol
- Benzodiazepines such as alprazolam (Xanax), diazepam (Valium) or lorazepam (Ativan)
- Muscle relaxants such as carisoprodol (Soma), cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) or methocarbamol (Robaxin)
- Sleep aids such as zolpidem (Ambien) or eszopiclone (Lunesta)
- Other prescription opioids

What other options do I have for pain?

Talk to your healthcare 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.

It is important to work with your healthcare provider to make sure you are getting the safest, most effective care.

- 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.

What should I do if I am given opioids for pain?

- Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed.
- Follow up with your primary healthcare provider as instructed. Work together to create a plan on how to manage your pain. Talk about ways to help manage your pain that doesn'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.
- Store prescription opioids in a secure place and out of reach of others (this may include visitors, children, friends, and family).
- Safely dispose of unused prescription opioids: Find your community drug take-back program or talk to your pharmacist for advice on how to dispose your unused opioid.

Visit www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose to learn about the risks of opioid abuse and overdose.

If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, tell your healthcare provider and ask for guidance or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP.