



# Opioid Medication & Pain: What You Need to Know

If you've had an injury, surgery or major dental work, you are likely to have pain. Pain is a normal part of life and healing. Talk with your doctor about how you can get the most effective pain relief with the least risk.

## NON-OPIOID PAIN TREATMENTS HAVE FEWER RISKS

For pain that will likely be gone in a week or two, it is always best to start with non-opioid pain treatments. Opioids may help control pain at first, but they are usually not necessary. Consider other options that may work just as well but have far fewer risks.

- Over-the-counter pain relievers
- Physical therapy
- Exercise
- Professional help coping with the emotional effects of pain

## OPIOIDS ARE STRONG PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Opioids can be the right choice for treating severe pain, such as from cancer or immediately after major surgery. However, medications such as Vicodin, Percocet and OxyContin are very powerful and can be deadly. Even if you take them as directed, ALL opioids have serious side effects such as addiction and overdose.

## OPIOIDS ARE CHEMICAL COUSINS OF HEROIN AND ARE HIGHLY ADDICTIVE

You can build up a tolerance to opioids over time, so you need to take more and more to get the same relief. The higher the dose, the more dangerous opioids are. You can even become addicted after a short time.

### Commonly prescribed opioids:

Codeine  
Dilaudid  
Fentanyl  
Hydrocodone (Vicodin)  
Hydromorphone  
Methadone  
Meperidine  
Morphine  
MS Contin  
Oxymorphone (Opana)  
Oxycodone (OxyContin)  
Percocet

These are only some of the prescription opioids. If you get a prescription for pain, ask your doctor if it is an opioid.

### If you are prescribed an opioid for short-term pain:



The prescription should only be for a three- to seven-day supply (often this is as few as 10 pills).



Take the lowest dose possible for the shortest period of time.



Always talk with your doctor about managing your pain better **without** taking prescription opioids.

# Opioids Facts & Figures

## THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Drug overdose is the **leading cause** of accidental death in the US and in Washington state, and opioid addiction is driving the epidemic.

*American Society of Addiction Medicine*



In 2015 alone, **718** people in Washington died from overdoses involving opioids.

*Washington State Department of Health*



More than **3 out of 5** drug overdose deaths involve an opioid.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*



Nationally, **4 in 5** new heroin users started out misusing prescription painkillers.

*American Society of Addiction Medicine*



In Washington, **57%** of people currently using heroin were dependent on prescription opioids before they began using heroin.

*UW Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute*

## TEENS AND OPIOIDS

**1 in 5** teens experiment with prescription drugs.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*



Nearly **half** of young people who inject heroin started off abusing prescription drugs.

*National Institute on Drug Abuse*



More than **4 in 10** teens who misused or abused a prescription drug took it from their parent's medicine cabinet.

*Partnership for Drug-Free Kids*



**95%** of parents believe their child has never taken a prescription drug for a reason other than its intended use.

*Partnership for Drug-Free Kids*

## KEEPING KIDS & TEENS SAFE

Sometimes kids and teens are prescribed opioids when they shouldn't be. Or they may be given a prescription for more pills than they need. Teens may also experiment with drugs they find in your medicine cabinet.

Follow these 3 simple guidelines whenever possible:

**1 DON'T FILL** a prescription for more than a 3-day supply (maximum 10 pills) for anyone 20 years old or younger.

**2 SECURELY STORE** opioids away from kids and teens.

**3 SAFELY DISPOSE** of extra opioids when you are done. Don't keep them around.

Visit [www.takebackyourmeds.org](http://www.takebackyourmeds.org) to learn more or talk with your pharmacist about disposal options.