



## Prescription Opioids

### What You Need to Know

Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain and are sometimes prescribed following a surgery or injury, or for certain painful health conditions. These medications can be an important part of treatment, but they also come with **serious risks**. It is important to work with your clinician to get 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, including:

<b>Tolerance</b> (Meaning you might need to take more of your opioid medication for the same pain relief)	<b>Physical Dependence</b> (Meaning you have symptoms of withdrawal when your opioid medication is stopped)
<b>Constipation</b>	<b>Sleepiness and Dizziness</b>
<b>Increased Sensitivity to Pain</b>	<b>Confusion</b>
<b>Lower Energy, Strength, and Sex Drive Due to Low Levels of Testosterone</b>	<b>Depression</b>
<b>Nausea, Vomiting, and Dry Mouth</b>	<b>Itching and Sweating</b>

As many as **1 in 4** people receiving prescription opioids long term in a primary care setting struggles with addiction.

It only takes **fewer than 7 days** of opioid therapy to develop a long-term opioid use disorder.

#### Risks are Greater with:

- + Mental health conditions (such as depression or anxiety)
- + Personal or family history of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose
- + Older age (65 years or older)
- + Sleep apnea or organ dysfunction

#### Avoid Alcohol

while taking prescription opioids. Also, unless specifically advised by your clinician, avoid certain medications:

- + Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax or Valium)
- + Muscle relaxants (such as Soma or Flexeril)
- + Hypnotics (such as Ambien or Lunesta)
- + Other prescription opioids



# Compass Opioid Prescribing + Treatment Guidance Toolkit



## Know Your Options

Talk to your clinician about ways to manage your pain that don't involve prescription opioids. Many nonopioid medications **actually work better** and have fewer risks and side effects. Options may include:

- + Over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin)
- + Topical medications, such as lidocaine patches (Lidoderm) or diclofenac gel (Voltaren)
- + Nonopioid prescription medications that are also used for depression or seizures
- + Physical therapy, stretching, 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.

## If You Are Prescribed an Opioid Medication for Pain

- + Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed.
- + You may also be prescribed a medication called naloxone (Narcan) that will reverse the effects of your opioid medication if an overdose is suspected.
- + Unless instructed otherwise by your clinician, continue using your nonopioid medications and therapies as primary treatment of your pain.
- + In most cases, reserve use of your opioid medication for severe or "breakthrough" pain.
- + Follow up with your prescribing clinician within a week.
  - + Talk about any concerns and side effects related to your opioid medication.
  - + Work together to create a plan on how to manage your pain without prescription opioids.
- + 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, family, pets).
- + Safely dispose of unused prescription opioids.
  - + Find your community drug take-back program, pharmacy drop box, or other ways to properly dispose at [www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou](http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou).
- + If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, tell your clinicians and ask for help, or call SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP

Adopted from the CDC and AHA Patient Opioid Factsheet

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/aha-patient-opioid-factsheet-a.pdf>

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