

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS



Prescription opioids, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others, can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain. They are often prescribed after 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 health care provider to make sure you are getting the care that is safest and best for you.

## RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS

Prescription opioids carry serious risks of addiction and overdose, especially with long-term use. In an opioid overdose there is often slowed breathing, which can cause sudden death. There can also be a number of side effects with prescription opioids, even when taken as directed:

- Increased tolerance
- Physical dependence
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Constipation
- Nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth
- Confusion
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Depression
- Lowered testosterone
- Itching and sweating

## SIGNS OF OPIOID USE DISORDER

Drug misuse occurs when someone uses a medicine beyond how it is prescribed, usually to get high, or relieve anxiety or distress. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), opioid use disorder involves:

- Strong desire to use opioids
- Inability to control or reduce use
- Development of tolerance
- Having signs of withdrawal after stopping or reducing use
- Trouble meeting social or work commitments
- Having legal problems due to drug use
- Spending large amounts of time to get opiates



## IF YOU ARE PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS FOR PAIN:

- Take medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- Keep your appointments with your doctor.
  - Work together to create a plan on how to manage your pain.
  - 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.
- Safely dispose of unused prescription opioids: Find your community drug take-back program, your pharmacy mail-back program, or visit [www.drugfreect.org](http://www.drugfreect.org) for more info.
- Visit [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose) to learn about the risks of opioid abuse and overdose.
- Always talk to your doctor before making a decision to stop or change your medication.



If you think you may be struggling with addiction, ask your health care provider what to do or call the 24/7 Access Line at **1-800-563-4086**

Avoid alcohol while taking prescription opioids. Also, unless specifically advised by your health care provider, medications to avoid include:

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



**CHANGE**  
the **SCRIPT**

**Change the Script** is a new statewide campaign that connects everyone whose lives are affected by the crisis: health care professionals, treatment professionals, and everyday people. With **Change the Script**, people can access the resources they need to face opioid misuse and write a new story about how we deal with this issue.

### RISKS ARE GREATER WITH:

- History of drug misuse, addiction, or overdose
- Mental health conditions (such as depression or anxiety)
- Sleep apnea
- Older age (65 years or older)
- Pregnancy



### KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Talk to your doctor about other ways to manage pain:

- Pain relievers such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Meditation
- Acupuncture

