

PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS

What You Need to Know



WHAT IS AN OPIOID

An opioid is a type of medication used to control pain, often called a narcotic. Prescription opioids are one of many options for treating severe acute pain. While opioid medications can reduce pain during short-term use, they come with serious risks.



KNOW YOUR RISKS

It is critical to understand the potential side effects and risks of opioid pain medications. Even when taken as directed, opioids can have several side effects, including:

- Nausea/vomiting
- Dry mouth
- Sleepiness/dizziness
- Constipation
- Confusion
- Depression
- Itching
- Physical dependence, meaning you have withdrawal symptoms when a medication is stopped—this can develop in a few days



KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

The goal is to control your pain enough to do the things you need to do to heal (walk, sleep, eat and breathe). Follow up with your prescriber if your pain is not decreasing as expected.

Things to Know:

- Pain is normal after surgery or acute injury
- Everyone feels pain differently
- Pain is usually worse 2-3 days after surgery
- Most patients report using less than half of their opioid prescriptions
- Many patients do not use any of their pills
- Your prescriber will review the risks and have you sign an opioid Start Talking form



To watch a video on prescription opioids, scan the QR code or search opioids on Spectrum Health's YouTube site.



KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is critical to know exactly how much and how often to take the opioid pain medications you are prescribed, as well as how to safely store and dispose of them.

Opioid Safety

- Never take opioids in higher amounts or more often than prescribed
- Do not combine opioids with alcohol or other drugs that cause drowsiness, such as:
 - Benzodiazepines, also known as “benzos,” including diazepam and alprazolam
 - Muscle relaxants
 - Sleep aids
- Never sell or share prescription opioids
- Store in a secure place and out of reach of others
- Begin tapering as soon as possible

Opioid Disposal

If you have unused opioids at the end of your treatment:

- Find your community drug take-back program
- Utilize prescription drug drop-off boxes at your local pharmacy or police station
- Mix drugs (do not crush) with used coffee grounds or kitty litter in a plastic bag and then throw away

You are the most important part of your health care team. Ask your provider questions, and know the facts before using opioids for your pain.

This content developed based on guidelines from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and Mi OPEN (partially funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services).

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ATENCIÓN: Si usted habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1.844-359-1607 (TTY: 711).

ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اذكر اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم 1.844-359-1607 (رقم هاتف الصم والبكم: 711).