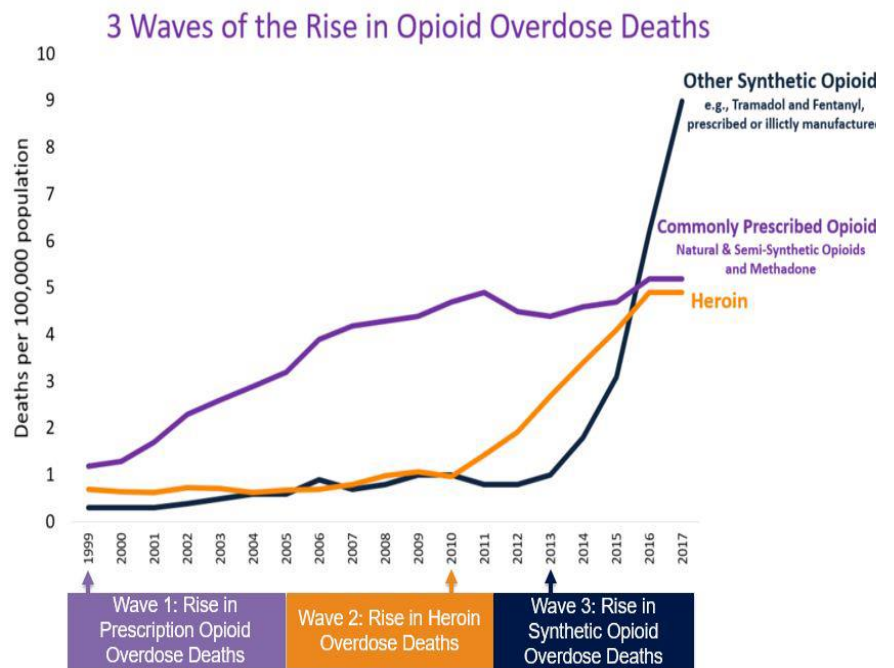




## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT OPIOID MEDICINE



## Read and Review

### WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone

(Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others. Opioid medications are used to treat moderate to severe pain.

### How do opioids work?

Opioids attach to proteins called opioid receptors on nerve cells in the brain, spinal cord, gut and other parts of the body. When this happens, the opioids block pain messages sent from the body through the spinal cord to the brain.

While they can effectively relieve pain in most cases, opioids carry some risks and can be highly addictive. The risk of addiction is especially high when opioids are used to manage chronic pain over a long period of time.



# RISKS OF OPIOIDS

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With long-term use opioids carry the risk of the following:

- Physical Dependence: having symptoms of withdrawal when the medication is stopped or severely reduced.
  - Addiction: this is a brain disease often chronic in nature, which affects the functioning of the brain and body. Medications change the structure of the brain and how the brain works. The most common symptoms of addiction are severe loss of control, continued use despite serious consequences, preoccupation with using, failed attempts to quit, tolerance and withdrawal.
  - Overdose: this happens when a toxic amount of a drug, or combination of drugs overwhelms the body that can result in death.
- Make sure you read all the medication you received with your prescription.
- Call 911 right away if you have any of the signs of overdose mentioned below
    - Pale or bluish skin color
    - Severe confusion; not knowing where you are
    - Heart beating slower than normal
    - Trouble breathing
    - Dilated pupils
    - Nausea or vomiting

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## IF YOU HAVE BEEN PRESCRIBED OPIOID MEDICATION

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**Inform your family or anyone you may be living with that this medication has the potential to stop your breathing. Ask someone to monitor you when taking to watch for slow, shallow, or trouble breathing. Tell them to call 911 right away if you have trouble breathing or you cannot be woken up.**

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### DON'T'S WHEN TAKING OPIOID MEDICATION

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- Do not take more than the advised dosage of medication prescribed as this may stop your breathing and cause you to pass out
- Do not take it upon yourself to increase your doses. Call your Doctor if your pain is still uncontrollable
- Do not consume any alcoholic substances while on this medication as your breathing may stop or you could potentially pass out.
- Do not take any sleeping pills such as zolpidem (Ambien®), temazepam (Restoril®), or anti-anxiety medication such as alprazolam (Xanax®) or lorazepam (Ativan®) while on this medication or you could potentially stop breathing or pass out.
- Do not take the medication any other way than it was prescribed (such as crushing or altering it)
- Do not drive or perform any tasks in which you would need to be alert while under the influence of this medication
- Speak to your Doctor if you are pregnant as these medications could harm your baby or negatively affect your pregnancy.

### OPIOID SIDE EFFECTS

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The most common side effects when on taking opioids are as follows:

- Hard stools
- Upset stomach, nausea and vomiting
- Feeling drowsy or tired
- Joint and muscle pain
- Confusion and headaches
- Depression, low mood, feeling sad or nervous
- Itching and sweating
- Trouble urinating
- Diarrhea
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### HOW DO I SAFELY STORE AND DISPOSE OF MY OPIOID MEDICATION?

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The most common side effects when on taking opioids are as follows:

#### Storage

- Keep medication secure and out of reach of children and others. (family, friends, children and/or pets)
- Keep medication in the pill bottle provided by the pharmacy and keep lid closed

#### Disposal

- Safely dispose of unused and/or expired medication: Contact your local pharmacy on how to dispose of used medication or visit your local take-back site (<https://disposemy meds.org>)

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### DISPOSING UNWANTED/UNUSED MEDICATION

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Below are the instructions to dispose in the event that you could not find a take-back site to throw out this medication:

- Mix medicine with used coffee grounds, dirt or cat litter.
- Then insert in a sealed bag
- After that place the plastic bag in the trash
- Lastly take your prescription bottle and scratch out your personal information, then recycle or throw away the bottle

For any medication in the form of a patch follow use these instructions:

- Fold the patches in half with the sticky sides together
- Then flush them down the toilet
- Do not place them in the trash where they can be found by anyone (children, or pets).
- Remove any personal information on the packaging and then dispose

**IT IS AGAINST THE LAW TO SHARE OR SELL MEDICATION THAT HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED TO YOU.**

### OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO TREAT YOUR PAIN

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There are other medications that are not classified as opioids such as Tylenol®, Motrin®, and Aleve® that may also help with your pain. Ask your Provider if these medications may be used with an opioid medication prescribed to you, Non-opioid pain medications also have risks so always check with your Provider if these medications are safe for you.

### ADDITIONAL WAYS TO EASE YOUR PAIN

- Heat or ice
- Stretching
- A pillow under the painful area
- Massage
- Talking to someone about how your thoughts and feelings affect your pain
- Listening to music

Talk to your Provider to make sure these things are safe for you.

**If you have any additional questions, feel free to reach out to your Excel office and make an appointment to see your Provider! For additional information on treatment please visit <https://findtreatment.gov/>**