

Opioids: Be Safe with High-Risk Medications

Living with pain can be tough and can impact your daily living and quality of life. It is important to talk with your doctor to identify ways to manage pain, considering all the good and bad effects of each option. Some medicines, like opioids, can only be prescribed by a doctor. Opioids may help with pain for a little while, but they also have some big risks and could cause other problems. So, if you and your doctor decide to use opioids for pain management, it's important to be very careful and understand the potential risks of use.

Examples of Opioids:

- Duragesic
- Vicodin
- Percocet
- Methadone



Making sure your pain is manageable makes you feel better and is intended to help you:

- Function better
- Participate in activities to help you recover
- Breathe deep to prevent other health issues, such as pneumonia
- Get up and move to prevent blood clots
- Improve sleep
- Enhance overall quality of life

Some patients are at risk for harm even with proper dosing; common kinds of harm include:

- Physical dependence or addiction
- Oversedation
- Distressed breathing
- Confusion
- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Constipation
- Depression

Opioids can make it hard to breathe and slow down your breathing, which is called respiratory depression. If someone accidentally takes too many opioids or mixes them with alcohol or other substances, they could overdose.



Naloxone is a medicine that can quickly undo the effects of an overdose by helping the person breathe normally again. Since naloxone works fast, but doesn't last long, the individual may need more than one dose before the emergency response (911) team arrives.



Recognizing the signs of opioid overdose and acting fast can save a life. Here are some things to look for:

- Eyes might have tiny, pinpoint pupils
- May not be able to talk, or they might seem like they're falling asleep or passing out
- Breathing might be slow, weak, or they might not be breathing at all
- May be making choking or gurgling sounds
- Body might feel really limp when you try to move them
- Skin might feel cold and sweaty
- Skin, especially around their lips and nails, might look a different color than usual

You might have a higher chance of having problems with opioids if you:

- Take opioids with alcohol/street drugs
- Take with some prescribed/over-the-counter medicines (ask your provider/pharmacist)
- Have/had issues with opioids or took too much before
- Have mental health problems, like feeling sad, anxious or worried a lot
- Have sleep apnea, which means you stop breathing for a short time while you sleep
- Are older; 65+ years old
- Are currently pregnant

Steps to take With Opioids

Explore Options:

- Try other ways to help with pain, like medicines that aren't opioids (acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Try activities like physical therapy, exercise or therapy to help with your pain

Prevent Misuse:

- Don't give your medicine to anyone else or sell it
- Keep your medicine in a safe place where others can't get to it
- Get rid of any extra medicine you don't take
 - Check with your pharmacist to see if you can return them to the pharmacy
 - Find a medicine take-back option near you at takebackday.dea.gov

Talk to Your Health Care Provider/Pharmacist:

- Understand what your medicine is for, how much to take, and any risks
- Always take your medicine just like your doctor says
- Visit your doctor for follow-up as requested
- Ask your doctor/healthcare provider if it is a good idea to have Naloxone (Narcan) on hand

Follow Advice:

- Other medicines that aren't opioids can also help with pain and might be safer. Your doctor and pharmacist are available to help you figure out what's best for you
- Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about different medication choices, side effects you're worried about and any questions you have. Your health is important; don't be afraid to ask and learn more!

Naloxone Training: Be Prepared to Save a Life

Every day, more than 250 people die because of drug overdoses. Naloxone can save lives by reversing the effects of an opioid overdose. Great Plains Quality Innovation Network developed this Naloxone training for **ANYONE** interested in learning more about how Naloxone can be used to save a life. Understanding how to use Naloxone may help you save the life of a friend, family member, neighbor or someone you love!

What Will You Learn in This Training?

- Signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose: How to recognize when someone is in trouble
- Three ways to give naloxone: Different ways to use the medicine to help someone
- Good Samaritan Laws: Rules that protect you when you try to help someone in an emergency

Why Should You Watch This Video?

- Being prepared to use naloxone will give you the confidence you need during an emergency
- Even if you're not sure when to use it, giving naloxone is safe and can't hurt someone who needs help

Access the Great Plains Quality Innovation Network Naloxone Training by clicking or scanning the QR code.

