



Stay Safe Using Opioid Medicines for Long Term Pain

Opioids are serious medicine

Opioids (say: OH pee oydz) are drugs which help relieve pain. But, they can also cause serious side effects, overdose, and even death when they are not used wisely. So, rule number 1 is to use an opioid medicine just as your doctor prescribes. Don't take more and don't take them more often than prescribed.

Common opioids

Some common opioids include:

- Methadone (METH a done)
- Hydromorphone (high dro More fohn)
- Oxycodone (ox ee KOH dohn)
- Fentanyl (FEN ti nahl)
- Morphine (MORE feen)
- Hydrocodone (high dro KOH dohn)
- Tramadol (TRAH ma doll)

Risks with using opioids

Opioids lead to higher risks of:

- Accidents, falls, and injuries
- Breathing problems (including not breathing)
- Memory problems
- Feeling drowsy, sleepy, or dizzy
- Reduced sex drive

Other risks include:

- Not being "regular" with bowel movements (constipation)
- Weakened or brittle bones (osteoporosis)
- Taking too much by accident (overdose)
- Death

Talk about your opioid use at every doctor visit

Stay safe using an opioid. Be honest with your doctor about how often you take your opioid, how it's working, and any side effects. You can become addicted by accident. If you have been addicted to a drug or alcohol in the past, you should not take opioids.

Your doctor may suggest safer drugs to control your pain. They may also suggest other forms of treatment such as certain therapies, exercise, weight loss, and counseling. These treatments can be used along with opioids or other medicines.

Take special care to:

- **NOT drive** a car, truck, snowmobile, ATV or any moving vehicle and NOT use dangerous equipment (such as a chain saw) after taking an opioid. Learn and respect how the opioid affects your body and mind first.
- **NOT use alcohol.** Do NOT use beer, wine, or hard liquor when using an opioid.
- **NOT use anxiety drugs** called benzodiazepines ("benzos" or "bennies"). Do NOT take these drugs when using an opioid:
 - ☠ Alprazolam
 - ☠ Clonazepam
 - ☠ Diazepam
 - ☠ Lorazepam
- Watch for trouble with high dose opioid use (this means an amount equal to or greater than 100 units of morphine daily). A high dose like this increases the chances of having an overdose 10 times or more.