

PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain and are often prescribed after a surgery or injury or for certain health conditions. These medications can be an important part of pain treatment, but they also come with serious risks. It is important to work with your health care provider to make sure you are getting the safest, most effective care.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND SIDE EFFECTS OF OPIOID USE?

Taking prescription opioids has serious risks such as addiction and overdose, especially with long-term use. An opioid overdose can cause sudden death. One sign of overdose is slowed breathing, but there are a variety of side effects from using prescription opioids, even when taken as directed:

- Tolerance (taking more of a medication for the same pain relief)
- Physical dependence (having symptoms of withdrawal when you stop taking the medication)
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Constipation
- Nausea, vomiting and dry mouth
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Confusion
- Depression
- Low levels of testosterone that can result in lower sex drive, energy, and strength
- Itching and sweating

As many as
1 in 4
PEOPLE*



who take prescription opioids long-term struggles with addiction.

* Findings from one study

RISKS ARE GREATER WITH:

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

Avoid alcohol while taking prescription opioids. Unless specifically advised by your health care provider, also avoid these medications:

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

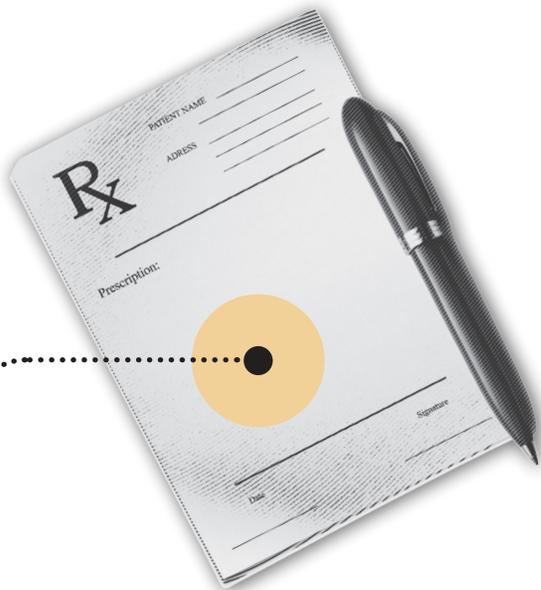
LEARN MORE | www.VenturaCountyResponds.org

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and American Hospital Association.

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Talk to your health care provider about ways to manage your pain that don't involve prescription opioids. Some of these options **may actually work better** and have fewer risks and side effects. Options may include:

- ❑ Pain relievers such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen
- ❑ Some medications that are also used for depression or seizures
- ❑ Physical therapy and exercise
- ❑ Cognitive behavioral therapy (a psychological, goal-directed approach in which patients learn how to modify physical, behavioral, and emotional triggers of pain and stress)



Be Informed!

Make sure you know the name of your medication, how much and how often to take it, and its potential risks & side effects.



IF YOU ARE PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS FOR PAIN:

- ❑ Never take more opioids than prescribed. Never take them more often than prescribed.
- ❑ Follow up with your primary health care provider within ___ days.
 - Work together to create a plan for managing your pain.
 - Talk about ways to help manage your pain that don't involve prescription opioids.
 - 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 (this may include visitors, children, friends, and family).
- ❑ Safely dispose of unused prescription opioids. Find disposal bin locations at www.VenturaCountyResponds.org
- ❑ Visit www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose to learn about the risks of opioid abuse and overdose.
- ❑ If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, talk to your healthcare provider or call the 24/7 Access Line: **1-844-385-9200**.

LEARN MORE | www.VenturaCountyResponds.org

Made possible through funding from Ventura County Behavioral Health, Alcohol & Drug Programs.