

# Let's Talk About Pain Medicines



A division of Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

# How are prescription opioids different than other pain medicines?

People think of opioids as illegal drugs, like heroin. Some prescription pain medicines are opioids too.

## Prescription opioids:

They work in the brain to block pain. You need a prescription to buy them. You may feel really good when you take them. You can get addicted to prescription opioids. When you are addicted, you feel a strong need to take more medicine to have the same good feeling.



## Names of some prescription opioids:

- Hydrocodone (Vicodin<sup>®</sup>, Lortab<sup>®</sup>, Lorcet<sup>®</sup>)
- Oxycodone (OxyContin<sup>®</sup>, Percodan<sup>®</sup>, Percocet<sup>®</sup>)
- Morphine (Kadian<sup>®</sup>, Avinza<sup>®</sup>, MS Contin<sup>®</sup>)
- Codeine
- Fentanyl (Duragesic<sup>®</sup>)
- Tramadol (Ultram<sup>®</sup>)

## Other pain medicines:

They work in the part of your body where you feel the pain, not in the brain. You can buy some of them without a prescription. You cannot get addicted to them.

## Names of some other pain medicines:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol<sup>®</sup>)
- Ibuprofen (Advil<sup>®</sup>, Motrin<sup>®</sup>)
- Naproxen (Aleve<sup>®</sup>)

**You can get other non-opioid pain medicines with a prescription.** Ask your doctor if they are right for you.

# Taking opioid medicines

1. Pill



2. Liquid



3. Patch



## Be careful

Sometimes the best choice is an opioid medicine. You must use it the way your doctor or pharmacist tells you to.

Read and follow any **warning labels** that come with your opioid medicine. Warning labels are usually on the label or on a sticker on the bottle. Sometimes they are in a separate printout the pharmacist gives you.

### Warnings

- If you take too much opioid medicine, it is not safe to drive a car.
- If you take too much opioid medicine, your breathing slows down. You can die.
- You can get addicted to opioid medicine. If you are addicted, your body will need more and more to feel good.
- Sometimes it is dangerous to take opioid medicines with other medicines.
- You might need to take opioid medicines at certain times of the day.
- Never drink alcohol the same day you take an opioid medicine.

Call your doctor if the medicine does not help your pain or if you have side effects.

# Tolerance, Dependence and Addiction

If you take opioid medicines long enough, 2 things will happen:

1. You will develop a **tolerance**. This means you will need larger doses (more opioid medicine) to help your pain.
2. You will develop **dependence**. This means that if you suddenly stop taking your opioid medicine, you could get sick: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and severe stomach pains. You will need to take less and less opioid medicine before stopping.

You can also become **addicted**. This means that your body needs more opioid medicine to feel good. If you feel like you need more medicine than the doctor gave you, tell your doctor.

## When should you take your medicine? How much medicine can you take?

You must understand how much opioid medicine to take. And you must understand when to take the medicine. This can be confusing.

### Look at the instructions on this label:

- If you feel less pain, just take 1 tablet, not 2.
- If you have less pain, wait longer to take the next dose or stop taking it.
- If your pain is very bad, take the next dose as soon as you can (4 hours after the last dose).
- If you feel you need to take more medicine before the 4 hours is up, you must call your doctor. Remember medicine might not make all the pain go away.
- Never take more opioid medicine than your doctor tells you.



# Opioid Prescription Labels

<b>R<sub>x</sub></b>	<b>Hometown Pharmacy</b> (800) 555-5555 123 MAIN STREET ANYTOWN, WI 22222
	DR. M. MARTIN
<b>No. 0289203-01012</b>	DATE 01/19/18
<b>JOSE GARCIA</b> 631 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, ANYTOWN, WI 22222	
<b>TAKE 1 OR 2 TABLETS BY MOUTH EVERY 4-6 HOURS AS NEEDED FOR PAIN</b>	
HYDROCODONE-ACETAMINOPHEN 5-325 MG TABLETS	
QTY 40	USE BEFORE 01/18/19
NO REFILL	



1. Who is the medicine for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the name of the medicine?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many tablets can Jose take at one time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If Jose takes 2 tablets at 8 am, when can he take more?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How many refills can Jose get?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Naloxone: A drug that can stop an overdose:

- Naloxone is a medicine that might stop an opioid overdose. It is also called: Narcan<sup>®</sup>, Evzio<sup>®</sup> or Narcan<sup>®</sup> Nasal Spray
- Naloxone can save your life if you took too much opioid medicine and are not conscious (cannot wake up).
- Naloxone is given as a shot (injection) or a nose spray.
- You can get a prescription for naloxone if you are taking opioid medicines.
- At some pharmacies, you do not need a prescription for naloxone. At these pharmacies, your family and friends can also get naloxone without a prescription. Find out if there is a pharmacy near you: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/standing-order.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/opioids/standing-order.htm)

## Sometimes you cannot take your opioid medicine with other medicines

It can be dangerous to take your opioid medicine with other types of medicines. Or the opioid may not work as well. Other medicines include:

- prescription medicines ordered by a doctor
- over-the-counter medicines you get without a prescription
- herbals, plants and other home remedies

If you are taking an opioid medicine and you need other medicine, you should:

1. Make a list of all the medicines and herbals you are taking. Show it to your doctor or pharmacist to learn if it is safe to take them together.
2. Always ask your doctor first to make sure it is safe to take new medicines while you are taking an opioid medicine.



### Some important examples:

1. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol):** Some opioid medicines have acetaminophen in them. If you take another medicine with acetaminophen at the same time you could overdose on acetaminophen. This could make your liver stop working and you will die.
2. **Some cough medicines have alcohol in them.** You cannot drink any alcohol the same day you take an opioid medicine. Some cough medicines have alcohol in them. Do not use cough medicines that have alcohol the same day you take opioid medicines.

## Store Opioid Medicine Safely

- **Keep opioid medicines in a safe location.** Put opioid medicines in a lock box or locked drawer. Hide the key to make sure kids and other adults cannot get your medicines. This will stop young children from accidentally swallowing them.

Never leave medicine on your countertops, tables, or nightstands where other people can see and take them.

- **Do not put opioid medicines in different bottles or containers.** Make sure you don't get your opioid medicine mixed up with your other medicines.

But you can pull out some opioid pills to put in a weekly pill box. Keep that pill box in a safe place.



- **Always know how many opioid pills you should have.** Make sure no pills are missing.
- **Close the lid tightly.** Make sure children and pets don't accidentally swallow the opioid. Closing the lid will also stop water or steam from entering the bottle.
- **Keep opioid medicines in a cool, dry place, away from light.** Heat, steam, water and light can make a medicine go bad. Do not put medicine in the bathroom or over the stove.

# Get rid of your unused opioid medicine:

Get rid of your unused opioid medicines as soon as you stop using them. This will stop kids and other adults from taking them.

## Here is how to get rid of your unused opioid medicines:

- Ask your pharmacist. Your pharmacist can tell you how to get rid of unused medicines.
  - If the pharmacy cannot take your medicine, some police stations, hospitals and clinics can.
  - The instructions that come with your opioids might tell you how to get rid of them.
  - Learn more at the Food and Drug Administration's website: [bit.ly/DiscardDrugs](http://bit.ly/DiscardDrugs)
  - Participate in the National Prescription Drug Take Back Day: Two times a year, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) plans a day where you can bring your unused prescriptions to certain locations. Check for a location near you: [bit.ly/TakeBackDrugs](http://bit.ly/TakeBackDrugs)
  - Where can you get rid of unused opioid medicine in your community?
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