PREVENTING OVERDOSE

Using drugs in any way other than prescribed is illegal, dangerous, and can be fatal. Store opioid pain relievers in a safe place, and out of reach of others. Do not sell or share prescription opioid pain relievers. Find your community drug take-back program, or your pharmacy mail-back program to safely dispose of unused prescription opioid pain relievers.

If you are concerned about your own use of opioids, don't wait — talk with the healthcare professional(s) who prescribed the medications for you.

If you are concerned about a family member or friend and their use of prescription opioids, urge him or her to talk to whoever prescribed the medication. Effective treatment of opioid use disorder can reduce the risk of overdose, and help a person who is misusing or addicted to opioid medications attain a healthier life.

Remember, your healthcare provider is a partner in your pain treatment plan. It's important to talk about any and all side effects and concerns to make sure you're getting the safest and most effective care.

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HAVE YOU BEEN PRESCRIBED AN OPIOID MEDICATION FOR PAIN? HERE IS WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW!

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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IDPH
Iowa Department of Public Health

Living with pain is difficult. Some medications (e.g., prescription opioids) can help relieve pain in the short term. However, they also come with serious risks and potential complications; and must be prescribed and used carefully. Patients taking prescription opioids are at risk for addiction, as well as unintentional overdose or even death. Opioid overdose can occur when a patient misunderstands the directions for use, accidentally takes an extra dose, takes other medications or alcohol at the same time, or deliberately misuses a prescription opioid or an illicit drug such as heroin. Persons who take opioid medications that were prescribed for someone else are also at risk of harmful consequences.

According to a national survey (conducted from 1999 to 2014), more than **165,000 persons** in the United States died from an overdose related to prescription opioids. The most common sources of these prescription opioids were friends or relatives, and the average age of those who overdosed was **20 years.**

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are medications (e.g., hydrocodone, morphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, and buprenorphine) that reduce feelings of pain by attaching to pain receptors in the body.

A variety of side effects can occur after a person takes opioids, including:

- Addiction
- Confusion
- Constipation
- Depression
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Itching
- Low levels of testosterone that can result in lower sex drive, energy, and strength
- Nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth
- Overdose (in which breathing and heartbeat slow or even stop)
- Physical dependence — symptoms of withdrawal that occur when the medication is stopped
- Pleasure
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Sweating
- Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis)
- Tolerance — increasing amounts of the medication are needed for the same pain relief

IF YOU ARE PRESCRIBED OPIOIDS

Use opioids only as instructed by your healthcare provider. Never take them in greater amounts, or more often than prescribed.

While taking this medication, avoid (unless specifically advised by your healthcare provider):

- Alcohol
- Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax and Valium),
- Muscle relaxants (such as Soma or Flexeril),
- Hypnotics (such as Ambien or Lunesta),
- Other prescription opioid pain relievers.

In addition:

- Never use another person's prescription opioid
- Talk to your healthcare provider about any and all side effects, and concerns
- Keep your medication secure