

# KNOW YOUR Rights, Risks and Responsibilities



Pain is a common medical problem that can be treated. The keys to getting the most benefit out of pain treatment are to learn as much as you can about any medicines your healthcare professional prescribes, to follow their instructions and talk to your healthcare professional or pharmacist about anything that concerns you.

If you or a loved one is currently taking prescription opioids, or if opioids are discussed or recommended as part of your treatment regime, it's important to understand your rights, risks and responsibilities.

## What are Prescription Opioids?

Prescription opioids are strong pain-reducing medications. Common prescription opioids include, hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, codeine, morphine, methadone and fentanyl.<sup>i</sup>

## Rights

As a patient, you have certain rights when it comes to filling or managing your opioid prescription. Some of these rights are legal rights protected by federal law — like your right to see your medical records and your right to keep these records private. Many hospitals and physician practices also have a patient bill of rights.

When it comes to opioid use, you have the right to informed consent — meaning you have a right to get the information you need to make an informed decision about the prescription and treatments you choose. This begins with understanding whether the medication you have been prescribed is an opioid. Protect this right by being an active and informed consumer when it comes to your use of prescription drugs:

- **Ask your healthcare professional about alternative pain treatments.** There may be non-opioid options that work better without the risks or potential side effects.
- **Explore your partial-fill prescription options.** Some states allow prescriptions for certain opioid medications to be partially filled by pharmacists at the request of patients or healthcare professionals. Partial-fills allow you to pick up and

pay for a smaller supply of opioids and return for the remainder of the prescription later, if you need it.

- **Contact your healthcare professional about any side effects** or to discuss options for tapering your use.
- **Get help from family members or friends** if you are having trouble with opioid use or need help advocating for yourself or understanding information from your healthcare professional.

## Risks of Opioid Use

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are potential risks and side effects associated with prescription opioid use. These include:

- **Addiction:** As many as one in four patients receiving long-term opioid therapy in a primary care setting struggles with opioid dependence or addiction. Symptoms of addiction can be physical, behavioral and psychological; the clearest sign being the inability to stop using the substance. Once addicted, it can be hard to stop. In 2014, nearly two million Americans either abused or were dependent on prescription opioid pain relievers.
- **Overdose (respiratory depression):** Taking too many prescription opioids can stop a person from breathing and lead to death. The risk of overdose happening can rise if a person takes opioids along with other medicines, such as sedatives or tranquilizers, that can affect the way they breathe.

Alcohol also can significantly increase the risk of overdose. This is why it is important to tell your healthcare professional about all the medicines you are taking even if you only take it some of the time, and if you drink alcohol. Drug overdose deaths and those involving opioids continue to increase in the United States. More than 115 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.<sup>ii</sup>

In addition to the risk of addiction and overdose, patients who take prescription opioids may also experience side effects. CDC warns patients of the following potential side effects:

- Tolerance — meaning with continued use, you might need to take more of the medication for the same pain relief
- Physical dependence — meaning you have 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<sup>iii</sup>

## Responsibilities

If you and your healthcare professional decide that prescription opioids are the right choice for you, be sure you understand your responsibility to safely use, store and dispose of prescription medicines. Remember that your healthcare professional prescribed this medicine for your use only. In addition, they are to be taken only for the condition your healthcare professional prescribed them. Opioids are powerful medicines and can be dangerous when used in ways they were not intended:

- **Take medicines ONLY as prescribed.**
- **Keep a current list of your medicines**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and dietary/herbal supplements. Bring your up-to-date medicine list to all of your medical and pharmacy visits.
- **Keep opioids and all other medicines in a safe place**, out of the reach of children. Keep your medicines in a secure, preferably locked place. For more information on safe medicine storage visit [www.upandaway.org](http://www.upandaway.org).
- **Never give away or share** your medicines with others.
- **Review your medicines** every six months and properly dispose of all expired, unused or unwanted medicines as soon as possible.
- **Find the disposal location** in your area by visiting [www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org/disposal](http://www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org/disposal).

For more information about the risks of opioids and things you can do to prevent abuse and misuse, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



If you or someone close to you has an addiction to pain medication, talk to your healthcare professional or contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's treatment help line at **(800) 662-HELP**.

Allied Against Opioid Abuse is a national education and awareness initiative to help prevent abuse and misuse of prescription opioids. Founded by the Healthcare Distribution Alliance, the initiative is a collaborative effort with diverse partners across the pharmaceutical supply chain, as well as organizations that are experts in public health and healthcare. Our goal is to contribute to solving the opioid crisis in a meaningful way by educating patients about their rights, risks and responsibilities. To learn more visit [www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org](http://www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org) or follow us on Twitter @AAOA\_Tweets.

ALLIED AGAINST  
**Opioid Abuse**

NCPIE encourages healthcare professionals and community groups to foster patient-professional communication about medicines. However, NCPIE does not supervise or endorse the activities of any group or professional. Discussion and action concerning medicines are solely the responsibility of the patient and their healthcare professionals, and not NCPIE. Please consult a licensed healthcare professional with questions or concerns about your medication and/or condition.



<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients/faq.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients/faq.html)

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/prescribed.html](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/prescribed.html)

<sup>iii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/AHA-Patient-Opioid-Factsheet-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/AHA-Patient-Opioid-Factsheet-a.pdf)



#### References:

1. Narcan (naloxone hydrochloride) intranasal [prescribing information]. Radnor, PA: Adapt Pharma; January 2017. [cited 2018 Nov 29] Available from: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/narcan-assets-uswest/NARCAN-Prescribing-Information.pdf>

2. CMS analysis of FFS beneficiaries with Part D considered to be “HRM” (high risk – 3 or more chronic meds plus chronic opioid) for CY 2017. Contact Quality Insights for more info.

3. MME calculators - <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/health-topics/mme-calculator.page>

[https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/calculating\\_total\\_daily\\_dose-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/calculating_total_daily_dose-a.pdf)

4. Wilder CM, Miller SC, Tiffany E, et al. Risk factors for opioid overdose and awareness of overdose risk among veterans prescribed chronic opioids for addiction or pain. *J Addict Dis.* 2016;35(1):42-51. Doi: 10.1080/10550887.2016.1107264

Dunn KM, Saunders KW, Rutter CM, Banta-Green CJ, Merrill JO, Sullivan MD, et al. Opioid Prescriptions for Chronic Pain and Overdose: A Cohort Study. *Ann Intern Med.* 2010;152:85-92. doi: 10.7326/0003-4819-152-2-201001190-00006

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## About Prescribing Naloxone

### 1: What are the benefits of naloxone?

- Naloxone is an opioid antagonist indicated for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose manifested by respiratory and/or central nervous system depression<sup>1</sup>
- Naloxone may be administered IV, IM or intranasally

### 2: Why prescribe naloxone?

- Patients are often unaware that even at medically appropriate doses, opioids have significant risks
- Patients are often unaware that naloxone is a potentially life-saving agent that reverses respiratory and central nervous system depression
- Data suggests that despite statewide expanded access initiatives, naloxone is underutilized<sup>2</sup>
- Even if your state doesn't require a formal prescription to access naloxone, patients may be more likely to obtain it if a prescription is provided

### 3: Who should receive a prescription for naloxone?

- Patients prescribed greater than or equal to 50 MME ( morphine milligram equivalents) per day<sup>3</sup>
- Patients taking opioids at any dose who have one or more of these risk factors:<sup>4</sup>
  - History of prior overdose, misuse of opioids, or IV drug use
  - On antidepressants or benzodiazepines
  - Has respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or obstructive sleep apnea
  - Drinks alcohol
  - History of a mental health disorder
  - Has limited emergency medical care access



# TAKING CARE OF MY PAIN MANAGEMENT

A guide for you or your caregiver to be active in either your own health care or caring for someone else.

Take this with you each time you meet with a health care provider (such as a doctor, physician assistant, nurse, pharmacist, or social worker) to discuss or treat your pain and medication. Share your issues and concerns in managing your pain and use this guide to have a discussion with your provider, also be sure to review the Know Your Rights, Risks and Responsibilities with this document.

Visit With: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## BE SURE YOU KNOW THESE THINGS:

- I am meeting with a health care provider today because:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What medical conditions I feel are related to this visit \_\_\_\_\_
- What other healthcare providers have I seen since my last visit with this provider?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What healthcare providers am I now seeing for my pain problem?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have my medication changed since my last visit to this provider?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- List all the medicines (on page 2) I am taking, including all on the following list?  
 Prescription medicine (can buy only with a prescription)  
 Over-the-counter medicine (can buy without a prescription)  
 Vitamins, herbs, or supplements I take (such as St. John's Wort)  
 Any NEW prescriptions I received during this visit  
 Written directions on how to take all my medicines  
 Major side effects of these medicines
- Besides taking my medicines, what else do I need to do?  
 Get blood tests or other medical tests?  
 Get extra help or equipment at home?  
 Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs?  
 Avoid eating certain foods? \_\_\_\_  
 Eat certain foods?  
 Change a bandage?  
 Exercise?  
 Schedule a follow up appointment? \_\_\_\_\_
- My pain level today is a mild, moderate, severe, worst possible pain (Circle One)  
 How much pain is necessary to justify the use of opioids?
- What prescription medications am I currently taking to relieve my pain?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Are any of these medication considered an opioid? If so, are there other non-opioid alternatives or alternative treatments to opioids for pain management we can consider?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What medication side effects should I be aware of? What are the signs of opioid addiction? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do I need a referral to other health care providers, tests or facilities? If so, Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Who should I call before my next appointment if I have questions or concerns In managing my pain? \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Being sick can affect all areas of your life. If you have questions or concerns about any of the following, check the box and talk about them with a health care provider.**

- Alcohol, drug, or tobacco use
- Alcohol, drug or tobacco use
- Addiction Problems (unable to stop using pills or alcohol without problems)
- Advanced care planning
- Caregiving concerns
- Changes in behavior, memory or thinking
- Cultural customs affecting health care
- Financial or health insurance
- Home safety
- Medical equipment needs; or help with walking, bathing, eating, dressing
- Recovering Addict
- Relationships/intimacy concerns
- Spirituality/religion
- Concerned about taking medicines
- Transportation & driving issues
- Understanding my illness or condition

Be sure to tell your Provider of any allergies or sensitivities you have to any medicine



# TAKING CARE OF MY PAIN MANAGEMENT

A guide for you or your caregiver to be active in either your own health care or caring for someone else.

## MY MEDICINE\*

WHEN I GET UP, I TAKE:

Drug name- Brand name or generic & DOSE:	This looks like: (Color, shape, etc)	How many?	How I take it:	I started taking this on: (date)	I stop taking this on: (date)	Why I take it:	Who told me to take it? (name)
Example: Lisinopril 10 mg	Round yellow pill	1 pill	By mouth with breakfast	June 3, 2008	Keep taking	High blood pressure	Dr. Smith

IN THE AFTERNOON, I TAKE:


IN THE EVENING, I TAKE:


BEFORE I GO TO BED, I TAKE:


OTHER MEDICINES THAT I DO NOT USE EVERYDAY:


Questions to ask about taking your prescribed opioids:

1. When do I know it is time to transition off opioid medications to another treatment for my pain?
2. How should I change medication options?
3. How will I dispose of my unused Opioid prescription if prescribed?
4. How should I store my opioid prescription?

Be sure to tell your Provider of any allergies or sensitivities you have to any medicine