



# Responsible Opioid Use



## Taking pain medication does NOT mean you will become addicted!

### Safety Tips:

- Never take an opioid pain reliever unless it is prescribed for you.
- Always take opioids as directed. Do not take more opioid or take it more often than is prescribed for you.
- Do not use opioids with alcohol or other drugs unless approved by your prescriber.
- Protect and lock up your opioids in a safe place at all times, and properly dispose of leftover medicine.
- Never share opioids with another person, it is illegal and very dangerous.
- Always read instructions that come with your opioid prescription. Contact your prescriber or pharmacist with any questions.

Patients taking opioids *as directed* to relieve pain seldom become addicted to the medicines. Addiction, itself, is a brain disease — causing both physical and mental dysfunction — It usually requires special treatment.

Addiction most commonly develops when a person misuses, or abuses, opioid drugs. That is, the person takes opioids more for the mind-altering effects they produce — such as to feel “high,” calm or relaxed, or in a “good mood” — than for pain relief. After awhile, if the person tries to cut back or to quit misusing the opioids, it causes uncomfortable feelings both physically and mentally. This can lead to overpowering cravings or urges to take more opioids.

Once addicted, the person usually cannot stop on their own — he/she loses control, and find the medications are not helping their pain plus, may be ruining their lives. For example, they may avoid personal responsibilities

or social activities to focus on getting and misusing opioids. This usually leads to trouble at work or school and at home.

Persons prescribed opioids for pain relief who have had problems with substance misuse or addiction in the past, including alcoholism, are at the greatest risk for developing addiction to opioid medicines. If you have had such problems it is very important that you tell any healthcare provider prescribing opioids for your pain, so you can be properly treated and get additional help if needed.

Addiction is often confused with so-called “physical dependence,” which consists of opioid tolerance and withdrawal. These effects may naturally occur in any person taking opioids and **are not** the same thing as addiction.



### Definitions:

**Substance Abuse:** excessive use of a potentially addictive substance, characterized by inability to stop taking, inability to work or socialize normally

**Misuse:** taking or using medication in a way not prescribed by your doctor

**Addiction:** loss of control over drug use, compulsive drug use, and continued use of a drug despite harm to oneself or others

**Physical Dependence:** the body will begin to go through withdrawal symptoms if you stop taking the medication, this is **not the same as addiction**

**Tolerance:** the reduction of drug effect over time as a result of exposure; with unchanging disease opioid use evens out and tolerance does **not lead to addiction**

### Risk for Abuse or Misuse:

- Previous personal substance abuse, misuse, addiction or diversion
- Family history of substance abuse
- Underlying psychiatric disease

# FACTS:

## Commonly Abused Rx Opioids

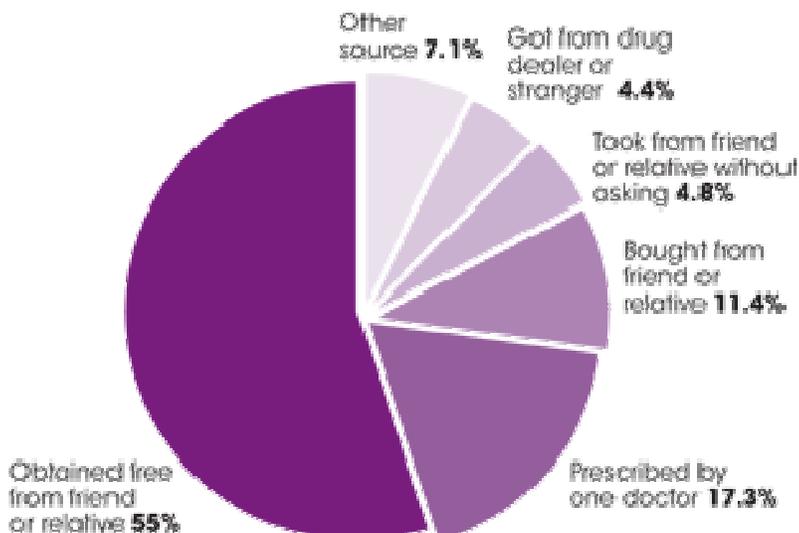
Hydrocodone (Vicodin®)  
Oxycodone (OxyContin®)  
Oxymorphone (Opana®)  
Propoxyphene (Darvon®)  
Hydromorphone (Dilaudid®)  
Meperidine (Demerol®)  
Diphenoxylate (Lomotil®)

In 2010, 2 million people reported using prescription painkillers non-medically for the first time within the last year—nearly 5,500 a day.

**One person dies every 19 minutes** from prescription drug abuse in the United States

In 2010 Monitoring the Future Study showed that 2.7% of 8th graders, 7.7% of 10th graders, and 8.0% of 12th graders had abused Vicodin and 2.1% of 8th graders, 4.6% of 10th graders, and 5.1% of 12th graders had abused OxyContin for nonmedical purposes at least once in the year prior to being surveyed.

## People who abuse prescription painkillers get drugs from a variety of sources<sup>7</sup>



**55% of first-time users got the drugs free from a friend or relative**

## Proper Disposal of Medications

These medicines may be taken out of their containers, mixed with garbage (such as coffee grounds, kitty litter, or other non-edible waste), put into a sealed plastic bag, and thrown into the trash. Always destroy any personal information on the container prior to disposal.

Drug “take-back programs” can be another good way to get rid of unused or old medicines and reduce the chance that they may end up in the wrong hands. Contact your local police department to see if there is a take-back program in your area, and if there are any rules about when and which medicines can be taken back.

You also should read the information that comes with your prescription, which usually tells how to safely dispose of the particular medicine.

***If in doubt, you can always ask your pharmacist.***

Baumann TJ, Strickland JM, Herndon CM. Chapter 69. Pain Management. In: Talbert RL, DiPiro JT, Matzke GR, Posey LM, Wells BG, Yee GC, eds. *Pharmacotherapy: A Pathophysiologic Approach*. 8th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2011. <http://www.accesspharmacy.com/content.aspx?alD=7986332>. Accessed September 5, 2012.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Policy impact: prescription painkiller overdoses. Accessed 2012 Sept 5. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/rxbrief/>.

Leavitt, SB. OpioidsSafety-911. Updated 2012 Apr 30. Accessed: 2012 Sept 5. Available from <http://opioids911.org/safety.php#Addiction>

Join Together Staff. Prescription drug abuse results in one death every 19 minutes in U.S. The Partnership at Drugfree.org. 2012 Jan 17. Accessed on 2012 Sept 5. Available from <http://www.drugfree.org/join-together/prescription-drugs/prescription-drug-abuse-results-in-one-death-every-19-minutes-in-u-s>.