

Opioids: Risks, Benefits & Options

Types of Opioids (not a complete list)

Prescription Opioids

- Hydropmorphone
- Hydrocodone
- Codeine
- Oxycodone
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Fentanyl

Partial Opioid

- Buprenorphine

Opioids Combined with Other Medications

- Tylenol with Codeine
- Vicodin

Illegal Opioid

- Heroin

Possible Side Effects of Opioid Use

- Nausea
- Constipation
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Cognitive impairment
- Sedation
- Slowed breathing
- Impaired vision
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Addiction

When Deciding to Take Opioids

- Inform doctors and pharmacists about all medications you take,
- Read all medication-related information before starting a new medication
- Take medication for the shortest amount of time possible
- Start at lowest dose possible
- Take as prescribed
- Adjust dose taken only under supervision of prescriber
- Schedule regular check-ins with your provider

Questions to Ask about Prescription Opioids

- Am I at risk for addiction if I take this prescription?
- Is there another way to manage my pain?
- How long will I be taking them?
- Are you prescribing the lowest possible dose?
- What's the plan to taper me off?
- Can I also get a prescription for Naloxone?
- Are there any drug interactions with medications I am already taking?

Non- Opioid Pain Management Options

Non-Opioid Pain Medications

- Acetaminophen
- (NSAIDs)
- Antidepressants
- Anticonvulsants
- Topical analgesics

Restorative Therapies

- PT and occupational therapy (OT) professionals
- Physiotherapy
- Therapeutic exercise
- Other movement modalities

Interventional Therapies

- TENS
- Massage
- Traction
- Hot and Cold
- Bracing
- Therapeutic Ultrasound

Behavioral Approaches

- Cognitive Behavioral therapy

Complementary and Integrative Approaches

- Mind-body behavioral interventions
- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Osteopathic and chiropractic manipulation
- Meditative movement therapies (e.g., yoga, tai chi)

Special Consideration for Older Adults

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- Opioids have a stronger effect
 - Multiple chronic health conditions
 - Medication interactions
 - Living alone
 - Falls risk

What to Avoid While Taking Opioids

- All types of alcohol
- Anti- Seizure medication
- Benzodiazepines
- Certain antibiotics including clarithromycin
- Certain antidepressants
- Certain antifungals
- Certain antiretroviral drugs for HIV infections
- Drugs for sleeping problems
- Some drugs to treat psychiatric disorders
- Muscle relaxers
- Other opioid medication

Keeping your Medication Safe

- Don't tell people you are taking opioids
- Store medication in a locked box
- Do not share your medication with others
- Keep medication in a place they cannot reach

Safe Disposal of Medication

- Disposal sites throughout the state
- Can mail in unused medication
- Prevents friends and family from misusing medication
- Don't flush medication down the toilet or put in the trash
- Remove personal information from the containers

Naloxone

- Blocks the effects of opioids
- Can stop an overdose
- Restores breathing
- Covered by insurance or free

Signs of Problem Use

- Not taking your prescription as prescribed
- Running out of your prescription too soon

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- Taking the prescription to feel high
 - Mixing opioids with alcohol
 - Changes in your mood
 - Withdrawing from friends and family
 - Appetite and/ or weight changes
 - Neglecting responsibilities
 - Distracted, unable to focus, confused
 - Changes in sleep pattern

How SASH Can Help

- Confidential and non-judgmental support
- Someone to talk to about the risks and benefits of using opioids.
- Information
- Yearly SASH Assessment
- Disposal of unused medication
- Assistance getting naloxone
- Referral to Chronic Pain Self-Management Program
- Referral for treatment

For More Information

- The Vermont Department of Health
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/alcohol-drugs>
- SAMSHA
<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
- VT Hub and Spoke System
<https://blueprintforhealth.vermont.gov/about-blueprint/hub-and-spoke>
- Turning Point Treatment Center
<https://www.vtrecoverynetwork.org/centers/>