Opioids: Risks, Benefits & Options

Types of Opioids (not a complete list)

Prescription Opioids
- Hydromorphone
- 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

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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 Ultra Sound

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
• 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
• 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 mediation
• Assistance getting naloxone
• Referral to Chronic Pain Self-Management Program
• Referral for treatment

**For More Information**
• The Vermont Department of Health
• SAMSHA
  [https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/](https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/)
• VT Hub and Spoke System
• Turning Point Treatment Center
  [https://www.vtrecoverynetwork.org/centers/](https://www.vtrecoverynetwork.org/centers/)