



Myths and Facts About Opioids

If used appropriately, prescription opioids can be effective in reducing pain. However, they come with serious risks and side effects, including the potential for misuse and abuse. To protect yourself, here are five common myths — and the corresponding facts — about prescription opioids.

Myth: I should feel no pain while recovering from surgery and prescription opioids eliminate all pain.

Fact: Pain after surgery is to be expected. It is actually part of the body's normal response to a surgical intervention. Pain should be controlled to the correct level so that a patient can function. AAOA created a video with The Johns Hopkins Hospital about [pain management after surgery](#).



[Watch this video](#)

to learn more about how pain is a part of the healing process.

Myth: I should keep leftover prescription opioids after my pain is gone in case I need the medicine in the future.

Fact: Always dispose of any unused prescription opioids when your healthcare provider advises you that you no longer need to take pain medication. Safe disposal of opioids after your pain has gone can help prevent misuse and is an important part of addressing the prescription drug abuse epidemic. You can always go back to your healthcare provider to discuss treatment options if your pain returns. Unused medicines can end up in the wrong hands, so you should safely dispose of any leftover prescription opioids as soon as possible.

10
Things You Need
to Know About
Safe Disposal
of Prescription
Opioids and Other
Medications

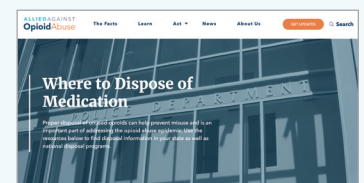


[Read this fact sheet](#)

for information on how to safely dispose of prescriptions.

Myth: I have to keep my prescription opioids until a community take-back day.

Fact: There are many ways to safely dispose of prescription opioids. Medication disposal pouches are often available from your healthcare provider's office or pharmacy. AAOA offers a safe disposal locator for you to find a place to safely get rid of your unused medications.



[Visit this webpage](#)

to find a disposal location near you.

Myth: Most people who misuse or abuse prescription opioids buy them illegally, so I do not have to worry about friends or relatives using my medication.

Fact: Safe storage is key in reducing abuse of prescription opioids, because misuse of these products can start in the home. About half of those who misused prescription pain relievers in 2017 said that they obtained the medicine from a friend or relative. Additionally, some medicines may be especially harmful and, in some cases, even fatal with just one dose if they are used by someone other than the person for whom the medicine was prescribed.



Check out this infographic to learn how to safely store medicines.

Myth: When I receive a prescription for opioids, the pharmacist must dispense the entire prescription to me.

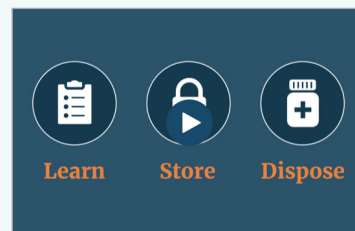
Fact: If opioids are prescribed to you, consider asking your pharmacist if partially filling a prescription is available in your state. Partial fill, when available, allows you to take home fewer pills and can be a useful tool to limit the supply of opioids available at home, reducing the risk of misuse by others.



Watch this video about the questions you should ask providers.

Myth: If my doctor prescribes opioid medications, I should take them and finish the bottle.

Fact: Opioid medications are not like antibiotics, so you do not have to finish the entire prescription. You should only "take as needed." You should always ask your healthcare provider about the risks associated with prescription opioids and discuss alternative pain treatments. You can also ask your healthcare provider when it is appropriate to transition from an opioid to an over-the-counter pain medication, such as ibuprofen. Make sure you have all the information about your treatment plan before leaving the provider's office or pharmacy.



Watch this video to learn about what you can do to prevent opioid abuse.

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 **1-800-662-HELP**.