Questions About Opioids?

Opioids may be one part of a multimodal treatment plan to help manage pain when prescribed after an injury, surgery or other medical condition, but they come with risks and responsibilities. Learn more about prescription opioids and what you can do to prevent abuse and misuse.

**What are opioids?**
Opioids include prescription drugs for treating pain — such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, codeine, morphine, methadone and fentanyl — as well as illegal drugs like heroin, carfentanil and fentanyl.

**How do opioids work?**
Prescription opioids reduce pain by activating receptors in the brain and the spinal cord to block pain signals sent from the brain to the body.

**What are the potential side effects?**
Opioids can cause constipation and abdominal pain. Additionally, opioids may cause nausea, vomiting and dry mouth, sleepiness and dizziness, confusion, depression, itching and sweating, tolerance and dependence.

**What are the signs of opioid tolerance?**
You may have developed an opioid tolerance if you experience a noticeably decreased effect when taking the same quantity of opioids and/or you need to take greater quantities of opioids to achieve the desired effect.

**What questions should you ask your provider if they prescribe opioids?**
- What are the risks associated with this medication?
- When should I stop taking opioids? And when do you want to talk about my progress?
- Should I get a prescription for naloxone to have at home?
- How should I store and dispose of the medicine?
- What precautions should I take during my pregnancy and postpartum?

Learn more at [www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org](http://www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org) | @AAOA_Tweets
Are there treatments for opioid dependence?

Talk to your provider if you think you have developed an opioid dependency. They can help you to identify the appropriate treatment. Common treatments include Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) programs — prescription medicines (suboxone or naltrexone) that can help you with recovery. They may also recommend therapy with a psychologist, psychiatrist or Narcotics Anonymous.

What are signs of an opioid dependency?

- Having a strong and persistent desire to take opioids;
- Being unable to reduce the amount of opioids you take;
- Taking opioids frequently, in greater quantities or over a longer period of time than intended;
- Repeatedly using opioids in physically dangerous situations;
- Starting to abandon or cut back on important, social, work related or recreational activities;
- Continuing to use opioids after having social problems or failing to fulfill obligations at work, school or home;
- Continuing to use opioids despite knowing that they are causing physical and psychological problems; and/or,
- Spending a lot of time trying to obtain opioids, use opioids or recovering from their effects.

How does opioid abuse affect the Hispanic community?

Opioid abuse has affected every community across the country, including the Hispanic community. The most recent statistics show that 65% of drug overdose deaths in 2017 were caused by illicit or prescription opioids.\(^1\) A recent study also found that Hispanic/Latino women being treated for substance abuse were more likely to report the use of illicit or prescription opioids (19%) as their main substance for abuse, followed by cocaine/crack (18%), marijuana (14%) and methamphetamine.\(^2\)

You can help prevent prescription opioid abuse by talking with your provider about your pain management options, the risks associated with prescription opioids and your responsibility to safeguard the medicines.

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