

# OPIOID MISUSE PREVENTION



An **opioid** is part of a powerful class of drug used to treat pain. If taken as prescribed and in certain situations, opioids can be an important part of treatment. However, prescription **opioids are not right for everyone.** Because they cause relaxation in addition to relieving pain, they can cause serious side effects and complications, especially if misused.

## Common prescription opioids:

- hydrocodone (Vicodin®)
- oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®)
- oxymorphone (Opana®)
- morphine (Kadian®, Avinza®)
- codeine
- fentanyl
- hydromorphone
- methadone

Heroin is an *illegal* form of opioids.

## Possible opioid side effects and concerns:

- Dry mouth, nausea/vomiting, constipation, drowsiness, dizziness/confusion, depression, increased sensitivity to pain, sexual dysfunction
- Tolerance: needing larger or more frequent doses to continue to experience the same benefits
- Dependence: being unable to function without opioids, and experiencing withdrawals if you stop taking them
- Addiction
- Overdose

*The longer you take an opioid and the higher the dose, the greater the risk for serious side effects (but even taking for as little as a few days has risks).*

*Opioid misuse especially increases the risk.* **Opioid misuse** includes:

- taking an opioid in greater amounts or more often than prescribed
- sharing with someone or taking someone else's prescription
- taking your own opioid but taking it for the wrong reason (ex. taking it to "feel good" instead of to relieve pain)
- taking it in a different way (ex. crushing instead of taking whole)

*Misuse can be on purpose or accidental (ex. when someone misreads the prescription label and takes the wrong amount). Poverty, unemployment, prior substance abuse, young age, mental health disorders, trauma, and ease of access to drugs increase the risk of misuse.*

## Preventing opioid misuse

**Safe use.** Use the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time, and always take as directed. Avoid mixing with sedatives (alcohol, anxiety/depression medications, muscle relaxants, sleep aids).

**Safe storage.** Keep your medication out of sight and out of reach. Keep in original bottles with caps secured. Keep track of medications in your house, the amounts, and the number of refills remaining.

## Safe disposal.

- **DO NOT** hold onto unused or expired medications "just in case," or flush medications down the toilet/drain.
- **DO** take medications to a local drop box, participate in a "Drug Take Back Day," or use a home medication disposal system. [doseofrealitywi.gov/](http://doseofrealitywi.gov/)

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

CDC: [cdc.gov/drugoverdose/](http://cdc.gov/drugoverdose/)

Substance Use Prevention:  
[dhs.wisconsin.gov/aoda/](http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aoda/)

Drug Enforcement Administration  
[operationprevention.com](http://operationprevention.com)

