



Talking with your medical provider when you are prescribed an opioid painkiller

In the unfortunate event of an injury, accident, surgery or other medical condition, your medical provider may recommend an opioid prescription painkiller for you or your child. It's a good plan to be prepared to discuss this choice of medicine, as there are certain risks when taking opioids that might be able to be avoided.

Ask your doctor if there is a non-addictive alternative

Studies have shown that opioid pain killers like Percocet and Vicodin are no more effective than many of the non-addicting alternatives. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen and naproxen treat pain as effectively as opioids and have less side-effects.

If opioids are necessary, request a short term prescription

Some doctors may think that you need medication in addition to NSAIDs or may feel that NSAIDs should not be used in your case. If this happens, ask if a 3 day prescription is appropriate. Many doctors tend to prescribe a 7-10 day supply of opioids which is seldom necessary.

Be sure to tell your provider if you have these medical conditions

The following medical conditions may increase the risks associated with taking opioid painkillers:


- COPD-(chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Sleep apnea
- Depression
- Anxiety
- History of addiction
- Chronic constipation

Also be sure to discuss:

- Family history of addiction or alcoholism
- Working in a safety-sensitive position.
- How your driving will be affected initially, and ongoing

Other important questions for your medical provider

- **If you are taking this after an injury, will taking opioids delay your recovery?** Studies have shown that opioid pain relievers may delay recovery and increase your risk of permanent disability.
- **If surgery is expected, how will this affect the outcome?** If taken prior to surgery, opioid medications may delay your recovery from orthopedic surgery.
- **How can I know if these pills are causing me to experience MORE pain?** Longer term use of opioid medications can cause a condition called opioid hyperalgesia where your experience of pain actually increases.



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