

Helping Elders Understand Prescription Opioids

AND HOW TO STAY SAFE



What are prescription opioids?

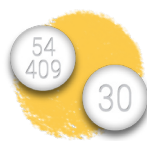
Prescription opioids are a type of drug that can be prescribed to treat moderate to severe pain—but they can have serious risks and dangerous side effects. Common prescription opioids include hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin), oxycodone (e.g., Oxycontin, Percocet), morphine (e.g., Kadian, Avinza), fentanyl patches (a synthetic opioid pain reliever), and codeine.



Hydrocodone
(e.g., Vicodin)



Oxycodone
(e.g., Oxycontin,
Percocet)



Morphine
(e.g., Kadian, Avinza)



Fentanyl
patches



Codeine

Prescription opioids can be addictive and dangerous, even when prescribed by a doctor.

→ Using prescription opioids can lead to:

- **Opioid misuse** (taking more of the drug, more often and for a longer period of time than prescribed, or taking someone else's prescription)
- **Opioid use disorder** (addiction)
- **Overdose**

Your tolerance for opioids can also increase, meaning you need more opioids to get the same effect.

[cdc.gov/RxAwareness](https://www.cdc.gov/RxAwareness)



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury
Prevention and Control

Safely take & store. Properly dispose. Don't share.



Safely Take and Store

- **Only take your prescription opioids as advised** by your healthcare professional. Never take opioids in greater amounts or more often than prescribed.
- **Follow up with your primary healthcare professional** and work together to create a plan on how to manage your pain.
- **Help prevent misuse and abuse** by never selling or sharing your prescription opioids or using medicine prescribed to someone else.
- **Store your prescription opioids in a secure place** and out of reach of children, family, friends, and visitors. Try not to lose pills and keep track of how many you have.



Properly Dispose

- Properly disposing opioids can reduce the risk of others taking the medication accidentally or misusing intentionally.
- Safely dispose of your expired or unused medication by finding a [community drug take-back program](#). If there are no disposal bags or drug take-back events in your area, you can follow these steps for getting rid of your prescription medicines:¹
 - 1 **Mix pills with something unappealing** to eat, such as coffee grounds or kitty litter. This makes the medicine less appealing to children and pets.
 - 2 **Place in a plastic bag** or sealed container.
 - 3 **Throw it away** in your trash.
 - 4 **Scratch out** your prescription opioid bottle's label with a permanent marker or peel off the sticker and rip it up to hide your personal information.



Disposing pills with coffee grounds



Don't Share

- Never share prescription opioids with family, friends, or others.
- Sharing prescription opioids can put others in danger and it is against the law.

Learn more about the signs of addiction, as well as recovery and treatment options at <https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/treatment>.

References

1. Food and Drug Administration, 2020, September. Where and How to Dispose of Unused Medicines. Retrieved from <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/where-and-how-dispose-unused-medicines>