

What should I do with my unused opioids?

Bring unused medicine to an environmentally friendly medicine disposal site. Find a site near you at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

Which common medicines are opioids?

Generic name	Brand name
Oxycodone	OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet
Hydrocodone	Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet, Norco, Zohydro
Morphine	Kadian, Avinza, MS Contin
Fentanyl	Duragesic, Fentora
Hydromorphone	Dilaudid, Exalgo
Methadone	Dolophine
Oxymorphone	Opana
Tramadol	Ultram, ConZip
Codeine Sulfate	Codeine

Are you or a loved one facing a substance use and/or mental health problem?

Call the National Helpline

1-800-662-4357 (HELP)

free, confidential help and referrals 24/7, 365-days a year.

Together, we can end the misuse of opioids and offer treatment that provides lasting relief for chronic pain.

6 things to know about pain and opioids



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1. Opioids only work on some short-term pain

Opioids can help you recover after some acute surgeries and injuries that will heal in several days. Chronic pain is different and opioids make pain worse the longer you take them:

- Opioids block pain for just a few hours. Over time opioids actually amplify pain. So when the drug wears off, you will feel more pain. If you continue to take opioids, the pain continues to increase—not because of the injury, but because of the opioids. This makes it difficult to stop taking them.
- Also, opioids reduce your body's ability to release natural chemicals (endorphins) that reduce pain.

2. There are many non-opioid options to relieve chronic pain

We all experience pain, and pain is real and very personal. Here are some ways to reduce pain that can work better than opioids:

- Over-the-counter medicines like Tylenol and Advil
- Gentle movement and exercise
- Hot and cold packs
- Relaxed breathing and meditation
- Massage and healing touch
- Positive thinking and distraction
- Physical or occupational therapy
- Cognitive behavioral therapy

3. Opioids are extra dangerous when taken with other substances

When taken with alcohol, muscle relaxers, or benzodiazepines like Valium (often prescribed to help with sleeping, reduce anxiety or prevent seizures), opioids can cause:

- Slowed or stopped breathing
- Cognitive function loss, dizziness
- Memory problems
- Death

4. Opioids are very similar to heroin—and just as addictive

Prescription opioids and heroin are chemically similar. They work by reducing the feeling of pain and producing a feeling of pleasure. At the same time, they diminish the body's natural ability to reduce pain and produce pleasure. That can make you depend on them. The risk of addiction increases quickly the longer you take opioids:

Risk of opioid addiction

Days' supply	Chances of being on opioids for a year or longer
5	10%
10	20%
30+	45%

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), March 17, 2017

5. Opioid addiction recovery is possible

Like high blood pressure or diabetes, addiction is a disease. There should be no stigma. As a community, we must eliminate the perception that addiction is a weakness and work together to get patients the treatment they need.

In addition to specialized pain clinics, there are many compassionate approaches and medicines that can help. Talk to your doctor to learn more.

6. Safely disposing of unused opioids is easy and very important

It's important to safely dispose of all unused opioids in your home. Not doing so can have deadly consequences:

- Children or pets can die if they accidentally ingest them
- Visitors, family members or friends can take and misuse them
- City sewage systems cannot filter opioids or medications. Throwing them in the trash, down the sink or flushing them down the toilet can poison our drinking water