



## Prescription opioids

### What are opioids?

Opioids are prescription-only narcotic medications. They treat and manage moderate to severe pain by blocking pain signals in the brain. The most common opioid medications include:

- Hydrocodone - common brands include Vicodin®, Lorcet®, and Lortab®
- Oxycodone - common brands include Percocet®, OxyContin®, Roxicodone™, and Xtampza®
- Morphine - common brands include MS Contin, Kadian®, and Avinza®
- Fentanyl - common brands include Duragesic® and Fentora®

Prescription opioids can be used to help relieve moderate to severe pain and are often prescribed following a surgery or injury. These medications can be an important part of treatment but also come with some serious risks. It's important to work with your health care provider to make sure you're getting the safest and most effective care.

## How Do I Get Help

If you believe you may be struggling with addiction, please call Behavioral Healthcare Options, Inc. at

**702-364-1484** or toll-free  
**1-800-873-2246**, TTY **711**

Tiene derecho a recibir ayuda e información en su idioma sin costo. Para solicitar un intérprete, llame al número de teléfono gratuito para miembros que se encuentra en su tarjeta de identificación del plan o los documentos de su plan.



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## Opioids

What you need to know

**Learn how to safely use opioid medications**





## What are the risks of opioid use?

- Tolerance - needing to take higher and higher doses of medication for the same pain relief
- Physical dependence - having symptoms of withdrawal when a medication is stopped
- Addiction - uncontrollable cravings and inability to control drug use
- Overdose or even death

### Risks are greater with:

- History of drug misuse, substance use disorder, or overdose
- Mental health conditions (such as depression or anxiety)
- Sleep apnea
- Older age (65 years or older)
- Pregnancy



## What are the side effects of opioid use?

- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Constipation
- Nausea, vomiting, and dry mouth
- Sleepiness and dizziness
- Confusion
- Depression
- Low levels of testosterone that can result in lower sex drive, energy, and strength
- Itching and sweating



## How do I safely take opioid medications?

### Why is the safe use of these medications important?

If opioids are to be used, then it should be at the lowest effective dose and for the shortest duration possible.

Leftover medication poses a risk to others, so unused pills should be returned to the pharmacy or other recommended disposal method.

Prescription opioid abuse is a serious public health issue in the state of Nevada. Forty-four Americans die from prescription opioid overdose every day. Understanding the potential risks and how to take these medications properly can help reduce serious consequences.

- Do not take your medications more frequently than prescribed and never take extra doses without consulting your doctor or pharmacist.
- To avoid dangerous interactions, talk with your doctor or pharmacist about all medications you take. Never mix alcohol or other sedating drugs, such as sleeping pills (zolpidem, Ambien®) or anxiety medications (diazepam, Valium®, alprazolam, Xanax®, lorazepam, Ativan®).
- Opioids are designed to be taken as needed. Once pain is under control, it is acceptable to take them less frequently or change to alternative options.
- Never share your medications with others.



## What alternative pain medication should I consider?

Pain relief options come in many forms, many with fewer risks and side effects than opioids. These include:

- Over-the-counter prescription medications, such as ibuprofen (Motrin®), acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or naproxen (Aleve®)
- Prescription strength anti-inflammatory drugs such as celecoxib (Celebrex®), diclofenac (Voltaren®), and etodolac (Lodine®)
- Select prescription non-opioid medicines which target the nerves that produce pain, such as gabapentin (Neurontin®) and pregabalin (Lyrica®)
- Injectable and topical non-opioid therapies
- Chiropractic services, physical and massage therapy, exercise, and cognitive behavioral therapy

