

# Managing Medication Interactions

Medication can be affected by the food we eat, beverages we drink, other medication we take and alcohol we consume. In turn, medication itself can also affect the ability to drive safely.

To stay safe and make sure our medication is working correctly, it is important to know about these possible interactions.



## Medication and Food

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you should take your medication on an empty or full stomach.
- Read the warning label on your medication bottle to make sure that there are not any foods that you need to avoid.
- Examples:
  - Vitamin K produces blood-clotting substances and may reduce the effectiveness of anticoagulants.
  - Grapefruit juice may affect cholesterol lowering drugs, heart medications and allergy medications.
  - The calcium in dairy products may interfere with absorption of iron supplements and some antibiotics.
  - Dietary fiber may lower the blood levels and may influence the effectiveness of some antidepressant medications.

## Medication and Other Meds

- Tell your ENTIRE medical team EVERYTHING that you are taking. This includes other prescriptions, over the counter medications, herbs and natural supplements.
- Examples:
  - Some antihistamines may increase the depressant effects (such as sleepiness) of a sedative or tranquilizer.
  - Ginseng may enhance the bleeding effects of heparin, aspirin, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen and naproxen.

## Medication and Alcohol

- Even a small amount of beer, wine or liquor can change how a medication works – it may increase OR decrease medication effectiveness.
- You may become dizzy and disoriented if you combine certain medication with alcohol.

## Medication and Driving

- Some medication may cause sleepiness, blurred vision, dizziness, slowed movement and reaction, fainting, excitability, inattentiveness and nausea.
- Make sure that you ask your doctor or pharmacist how the drug may impact driving. Do not drive on a new drug until you know how you react.

## In Case of an Emergency...

- **Call 911** if the person is:
  - Not breathing
  - Having seizures
  - Is unconscious
  - Has collapsed
- If you think you or someone else may be poisoned, call your local poison center at **1-800-222-1222**.
  - Connects you to your local poison center that serves your area
  - Trained experts are available 24/7
  - Information is available in over 160 languages





# Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Your Prescriptions

- › What is the name of the medication?
- › Why am I taking this medication?
- › What are some possible side effects I may experience?
- › How much do I take and how often?
- › What do I do if I take too much or miss a dose?
- › Is there anything I should avoid while taking this medication?
- › Does this medication replace something I am already taking?



# Managing Your Medications

*Prepare for your medical visit!*

## Before your medical appointment, make sure you:

- › Ask for drug consultation time (extra time) when making your appointment.
- › Take someone with you to the appointment.
- › Take a list of your medications, herbs and vitamins.
- › Take a list of questions to ask.
- › Bring something to write on/with, so you can take notes.
- › Ask about generic medication.

## At the Pharmacy, make sure you:

- › Take a list of medications, herbs and vitamins.
- › Ask if it is safe to take pills out of their original box/container and use a pill organizer.
- › Ask about generics or discount programs.
- › Ask about any restrictions that you may have with your medications.

## Medication Management Techniques

Keep track of ALL the names of ALL your medications, the reactions you have to them, and any questions you have.

## Use a Medication Journal such as:

- › A wallet card medication list
- › An electronic document on your computer
- › A medication management website
- › A smart phone app



## Keep track of medication refills by using:

- › A medication calendar
- › An automated pharmacy call reminder system

## Where you store your medication is IMPORTANT!

Keep them in a place that is...

- › Cool, dry and dark
- › Locked away from children
- › Separate from the medication of other people in your household

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# Dispose of Medicines, Vitamins & Other Supplements Properly

Do you have unwanted or expired prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines or supplements in your home?

Do **NOT** flush or pour them down the drain unless noted differently on the medicine's packaging!



**Do not flush medicines, vitamins or other supplements down the drain unless noted on the packaging.**



**Remove or conceal personal information and Rx number using a black marker.**



**Put undesirable substance such as used coffee grounds or cat litter into disposable container with lid (or plastic bag). Mix the medicine or supplement with undesirable substance.**



**Seal medicine mixture with lid or inside plastic bag. Dispose mixture and medicine container in trash.**



**Close or tie trash bag. Take trash bag out to garbage as close to garbage pick up time as possible.**

Call your local trash or recycling provider for information on Drug Take Back programs & recycling options.



# Do's and Don'ts of Pain Medicines



*These tips can help you or anyone know to safely use opioid pain medicines.*

## DO

**Know your medicines:** Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about HOW and WHY you take each medicine.

## DO

**Know the signs of overdose:** Ask others in your home to help you watch out for:

- slurred speech
- confusion
- difficulty staying awake
- dizziness
- vomiting
- trouble breathing
- pale or clammy skin

*Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about naloxone, a medicine to treat opioid overdose.*

## DO

**Store your medicines safely:** Keep them in the original, labeled packaging where others can't access them. Dispose of old or unused medicines.

## DO

**Tell every member of your health care team:** Bring all of your medicines to every doctor or hospital visit so they can be reviewed.

## DON'T

**Don't take any medicine that was not prescribed to you, and don't share your medicine with others.**

## DON'T

**Don't take any medicine left over from an earlier treatment.**

## DON'T

**Don't change the dose or how often you take your medicines without talking to your doctor.**

## DON'T

**Don't take pain medicines with alcohol or other drugs, and don't take them with other medicines without checking with your doctor.**

### Glossary:

**Opioid** – A “narcotic” pain medicine that reduces the feeling of pain

**Overdose** – Your body's response to too much medicine, can be deadly

**Medicine disposal** – Throw away medicines in the trash or talk to your pharmacist about other disposal options

# What I should know about opioid pain medicine



## WHAT IS AN OPIOID?

Opioids are strong pain medicines that are used to treat moderate to severe pain when other pain medications have not worked.

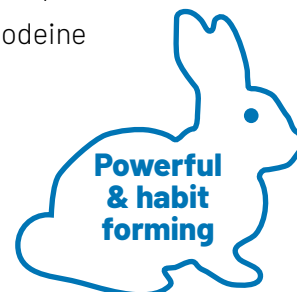
### Common Pain Medications

- Aspirin
- Tylenol
- Ibuprofen
- Aleve
- Gabapentin
- Lyrica
- Lidocaine



### Opioid Medications\*

- **Phenergan with codeine** cough medicines
- **Norco** hydrocodone with acetaminophen
- **Percocet** oxycodone with acetaminophen
- **Tylenol #3** acetaminophen with codeine
- **MS Contin** morphine
- **Oxycontin** oxycodone
- **Ultram** tramadol
- **Pain patches** fentanyl
- **Dilaudid** hydromorphone



### Signs of an Overdose



**Seek immediate medical attention if you experience:**

- Severe dizziness
- Inability to stay awake
- Hallucinations
- Heavy or unusual snoring
- Slow breathing

\*Opioids are also referred to as "opiates" or "narcotics."

### Do Not Use While Taking Opioids\*\*

\*\*Unless specifically advised by your doctor

SUBSTANCES	EXAMPLES
<b>Alcohol</b>	Beer, Wine, Liquor
<b>Anti-Anxiety Pills</b>	Xanax or Valium
<b>Muscle Relaxants</b>	Soma or Flexeril
<b>Sleep Aids</b>	Ambien or Lunesta

**CALL  
911**

- Slow or no heartbeat
- Aren't breathing
- Cannot be woken up
- Lips or fingernails are blue
- Can't speak clearly
- While asleep making gasping, gurgling, or snorting sounds



# What I should know about opioid pain medicine



## Common Side Effects



Dizziness, drowsiness



Low blood pressure  
upon standing



Dry mouth



Itching & sweating



Low sex hormones,  
low energy



Constipation,  
nausea, vomiting

## Important Things to Know

- Use opioid medicines **AS NEEDED AND DIRECTED** only
- If taken for more than 2 weeks, speak with your doctor for a plan to stop
- **NEVER** take more than prescribed
- **DO NOT DRIVE** until you know how the medication affects you
- **NEVER** take someone else's medicine
- **NEVER** sell or share your medicine

**Talk to your provider about any concerns or questions you have about how to take your medication.**

## Factors that Increase Risks of Dangerous Side Effects

- Are age 65 or older
- Sleep apnea, COPD, asthma, kidney or liver problems
- First time opioid users
- High dose of opioids
- Currently taking medications for anxiety or sleep
- Have a history of problems with alcohol or other substances

## Anti-Overdose Medication

- If you are taking opioid medicines, ask your doctor about Naloxone, a medicine that can temporarily reverse overdose and prevent death.
- If you are unsure if an opioid is causing symptoms, still give Naloxone as it is not known to cause any harm in non-opioid overdose.
- Immediate medical attention is required even if Naloxone is administered.

If you or someone you know are struggling with addiction, tell your doctor or call the **National Helpline at 1-800-662-4357**.

## POTENTIAL RISKS

**Tolerance:** need a higher dose to get the same pain relief effect

**Dependence:** withdrawal symptoms if stopped abruptly

**Withdrawal symptoms:** pain, aches, sweating, nausea, vomiting, trouble sleeping

**Addiction:** dependence with abusive pleasure seeking behavior



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This project is/was supported by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U1QHP28740, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program for \$2.5 million. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy or, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.





## Here for you in changing times.

“I don’t want to leave my home. How **can I get food** and medications?”

“I lost my job and my bills are stacking up. How **can I get help?**”

“**I’m worried** that my mom might be feeling socially isolated during this time.”

### *Free certified professionals and helpful online resources*

- Transportation needs
- Food and medication delivery
- Financial assistance
- Care for a loved one
- Housing
- And more

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