

## **What are prescription opioids?**

Prescription opioids can be used to treat moderate-to-severe pain and may be prescribed following surgery or injury, or for health conditions such as cancer. Examples of commonly prescribed opioids include the following:

- Codeine
- Fentanyl
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin®)
- Hydromorphone
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone (OxyContin®, Percocet®)
- Oxymorphone
- Tapentadol

## **When the prescription becomes the problem**

Opioids can help with the management of pain; however, they carry considerable potential risk. There is also not enough evidence to show long-term benefit of treatment of chronic pain using prescription opioids.

**In addition to the serious risks of addiction, misuse, and overdose, the use of prescription opioids can have a number of side effects, even when taken as directed:**

- Tolerance—meaning you might need to take more of the medication for the same pain relief
- Physical dependence—meaning you have symptoms of withdrawal when the medication is stopped
- 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

<https://www.cdc.gov/rx-awareness/information/index.html#:~:text=Opioids%20may%20be%20prescribed%20to,non%2Dopioid%20medications%20for%20pain.>

- Itching
- Sweating

Nearly 14% of all drug overdose deaths in 2022 involved prescription opioids.<sup>1</sup> From 1999 to 2022, approximately 294,000 people died in the U.S. from an overdose involving prescription opioids.<sup>1</sup> The number of U.S. drug overdose deaths involving prescription opioids in 2022 was approximately 4 times the number in 1999.<sup>1</sup>

Overdose is not the only risk related to prescription opioids. Anyone who takes prescription opioids can develop an opioid use disorder.

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