

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR OPIOID PRESCRIPTION

*This information is to help you better understand the risks and benefits of taking an opioid medication that is prescribed to you. It may also help you communicate better with your doctor or healthcare provider when discussing your pain management. Always talk to your provider if you have any questions or concerns about pain, your prescription, and overall health.*

### 1. Facts about Opioids:

- Opioid medications are a class of drugs used to reduce pain, but they may not eliminate pain completely.
- Some common examples of an opioid medication are hydrocodone, oxycodone, tramadol, codeine, morphine and fentanyl.
- The pain management plan that your physician or provider created for you, may include a combination of different types of medications and other treatments such as:
  - ▶ Non-opioid medications including over-the-counter medications (OTC)
  - ▶ Non-opioid prescription medications
  - ▶ Physical therapy, yoga, acupuncture, massage therapy, heat or cold packs, injections, etc.
- Opioids do NOT treat the cause of your pain but temporarily dull the feeling of pain.
- Opioids are highly addictive because they trigger powerful reward centers in the brain. Opioids are safer when used for the shortest time and at the lowest possible dose.
- Opioids are intended to be used for short-term treatment of pain.
- Opioids are not effective when taken long-term for chronic pain. Ask your provider about alternatives to opioids.

### 2. What Causes Pain?

- Pain occurs when the nerves at the location of an injury or surgery send a message to your brain which causes you to feel the sensation called pain.
- Pain is a normal part of the natural healing process after an injury or surgery.
- Pain is protective because it can warn you about danger or the need to seek medical care.
  - ▶ For example, pain tells you to remove your hand from a hot stove.
- Pain can also be related to a medical illness and alert you to seek medical care.

### 3. Side Effects and Safety Tips:

- There are many possible side effects that may occur when you take an opioid medication.
- Common Side Effects are constipation, sedation and drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, or changes in mood such as euphoria (feeling “high”).
- Always follow the instructions on your opioid prescription and take as directed. Do not take extra doses, a higher dose or dose more frequently without first speaking with your healthcare provider.

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- Only take an opioid medication that is prescribed to you.
- Do NOT share your opioid medication with others or take opioid medication from other people.
- **Opioids can cause overdose and death.** Opioid overdose causes breathing to markedly slow down which leads to hypoxia (the brain is deprived of oxygen). If and when breathing stops, death will occur from overdose.
- Do not take an opioid medication with alcohol or other medications that can cause drowsiness, unless prescribed by your provider. Taking an opioid together with benzodiazepines (such as alprazolam, diazepam, clonazepam, temazepam) significantly increases the risk of overdose.
- Ask your provider for a prescription of Naloxone which can be used in an overdose situation to help someone recover. (Naloxone is now also available without a prescription (OTC).
- Tell a friend or family member that you are taking a prescription opioid. **Be sure they know how to use Naloxone and where it is located. Tell friends and family to call 911 as soon as possible** if they give you Naloxone or have any concern about overdose symptoms. A second dose may be given. **Calling 911 is very important because emergency medical care may be necessary in addition to Naloxone,** even if a person starts breathing again.
- Be sure to safely store your opioid prescription so that it will not be stolen or accidentally taken by a child or pet. A locked container or safe may be used.
- Dispose of unused opioid medication safely.\*

\* To safely dispose of medications, visit: <https://www.dea.gov/takebackday#collection-locator> for locations. Many local pharmacies offer disposal services for medications. Please call your local pharmacy and inquire.

## 4. Ask questions and have a conversation with your provider

- Be sure that you understand the directions on how to take your opioid medication and how to contact your provider after hours and on weekends.
- Always ask your doctor or provider about the potential side effects and drug interactions when you receive a prescription.
  - ▶ For example: “What can I expect when I take this drug?”
  - ▶ “Is it safe for me to drive or operate machinery when I take this medication?”
  - ▶ “Is it safe to take with my other medications?”
- Be sure to tell your provider about all the medications you take, including over the counter (OTC) medications, vitamins, or supplements.
- Tell your provider if you have mental health conditions or a family history of mental health conditions.
- **Tell your provider if you have sleep apnea or a sleep disorder** because these conditions may increase the risks associated with taking an opioid medication.
- Tell your provider if you currently have SUD or a history of substance use disorder (SUD), including alcohol use disorder/ binge drinking or opioid use disorder (OUD). Let your doctor know if there is a family member with SUD.
- Tell your provider if you are on medication to treat SUD.
- If you are worried that you have SUD, talk with your provider and seek help. Substance use disorder is a chronic medical brain disease. OUD/SUD can be treated successfully. Medications used to treat OUD and SUD are effective and save lives.

## 5. Resources

Here are some resources if you or someone you know needs help or more information:

- **Find Help Now Kentucky:** 1-877-318-1871, or after hours: **Ky Opioid Assistance and Resource Hotline:** 1-800-854-6813
- **Experiencing a crisis?** Contact the **SUICIDE AND CRISIS HOTLINE: Call or Text: 988**
- **This link will help you find more information on Naloxone:** [FindNaloxone.ky.gov](http://FindNaloxone.ky.gov)
- **KY Statewide Opioid Stewardship Program:** [www.kentuckysos.com](http://www.kentuckysos.com)