

# Helping Your Child Safely Take Prescription Pain Medicine: The Caregiver's Guide

## This guide will help you:

- Understand how prescription opioid medicines help with pain
- Understand the dangers of opioids
- Talk to your child's doctor about your child's pain
- Give your child opioids safely
- Store opioids safely

## What are Opioids?

Opioids are strong pain medicines that you can only get with a doctor's order (prescription), including hydrocodone, oxycodone, hydromorphone, and morphine.

Opioids help control your child's pain because they keep your child's brain from getting pain messages sent by nerves in your child's body.

Sadly, some people do not use opioids the way doctors tell them to. And, some people get addicted even if they take them the right way. Hundreds of people die from opioid overdose each day.

Your child's doctor may give them an opioid to take after surgery. It is important to follow these safety tips if you give your child opioids.



## What are the dangers of taking opioids?

All medicines can have side effects. Call your child's doctor if a side effect is causing your child problems. Common side effects of opioids include:

- Sleepiness
- Constipation
- Itching
- Upset stomach

These are not usually dangerous when you follow the directions for taking opioids.

If your child has to be on opioids for a longer than several days or so, there are other risks. These include:

- Tolerance (needing more opioid for the same pain relief)
- Physical dependence (having flu-like symptoms when your child stops taking the opioid)
- Addiction (when someone craves the medicine so much that they keep taking it even when it hurts their health, relationships, or money). A teen or adult addicted to opioids may:
  - Want to get more when the prescription runs out (they may even lie to a doctor to get more)
  - Do inappropriate or risky things they would not normally do (such as buy and use street drugs)
  - Try to get opioids from a friend or family member
  - Steal opioids

To give your child opioids as safely as possible, please follow the Opioid Safety Checklist on the next page as well as information in this guide.

## Opioid Safety Checklist

- Only give opioids to the person they were prescribed for.
- Only give your child opioids for the reason they were ordered.
- Do not give your child any more opioids than your doctor tells you. You can always give less if other ways of relieving pain work (like Tylenol or ibuprofen).
- Keep a medicine log. Tell your child's doctor how your child is doing with their pain and how the medicines are helping.
- Store opioids in a locked cabinet away from children, relatives, and visitors.
- Keep track of how much medicine is in the container. This way, you know if someone else is taking the medicine.
- Safely get rid of any leftover opioids as soon as your child no longer needs them.

## How do I work with my child's doctor to help my child manage pain?

Be prepared for your visit. Take these things with you:

- This guide
- Your child's health insurance card
- Your ID card
- Make a list of medicines and vitamins your child takes here:

Medicine	Dose	# of Times
	(how much)	per Day

## Speak up during your visit.

### Use this guide to help you:

- Ask questions with your child present about any new medicines
- Write down answers

### New Medicine #1:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What it is for: \_\_\_\_\_

When to start: \_\_\_\_\_

Take (# of pills) \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours

As needed

When to stop: \_\_\_\_\_

### New Medicine #2:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What it is for: \_\_\_\_\_

When to start: \_\_\_\_\_

Take (# of pills) \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours

As needed

When to stop: \_\_\_\_\_

### New Medicine #3:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What it is for: \_\_\_\_\_

When to start: \_\_\_\_\_

Take (# of pills) \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours

As needed

When to stop: \_\_\_\_\_

### New Medicine #4:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

What it is for: \_\_\_\_\_

When to start: \_\_\_\_\_

Take (# of pills) \_\_\_\_\_ every \_\_\_\_\_ hours

As needed

When to stop: \_\_\_\_\_

