

It is important to be open and honest with your doctor. Talk about your use of opiate medications. If you experience any problems, such as tolerance or dependency, your doctor can help.

Here are some tips for reducing your use of opiate medications:

- Always follow the prescribed directions.
- Be aware of potential interactions with other drugs, such as alcohol, antihistamines, barbiturates, or benzodiazepines.
- Never stop or change your prescribed dosage without first discussing it with your doctor.
- Never use another person's medications.
- Tell your doctor about all the medications you are taking. Don't forget over-the-counter medicines and dietary and herbal supplements.

Resources

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>
(800) 662-4357

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

www.na.org
(818) 773-9999

Families Anonymous

www.familiesanonymous.org
(800) 736-9805

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>
(800) 729-6686

Opiates

When Pain Medications
Become a Problem



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An estimated 48 million people have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetime. In 2005, over 11 million persons aged 12 or older used a prescription pain reliever non-medically. **Almost 12 percent of young adults age 18 to 25 misused opiate pain relievers.**

What are opiates?

Doctors prescribe opiates to help patients manage pain. Opiates block your brain's sensation of pain. Opiates can also affect the pleasure centers of the brain causing a sense of joy and euphoria.

Taken as directed by a doctor, these medications are safe and rarely lead to dependency. However, long-term use or misuse of opiate medications can result in physical dependence.

Common opiate medications are:

- Codeine
- Darvon
- Demerol
- Dilaudid
- Duragesic
- Fentanyl
- Lortab
- Methadone
- Morphine
- OxyContin
- Percocet
- Percodan
- Stadol
- Vicodin

Could I be abusing or dependent on opiate medications?

Physical dependence on opiate medications can occur when the body adapts or gets used to the presence of the drug. More of the drug is required to achieve the same pain blocking effect. Someone who is physically dependent may experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop using the drug.

You can abuse opiate medications by taking more than is needed for pain control or by taking it to get high. Repeated abuse of opiate medications can lead to dependency.

Abuse and dependency can result in life-threatening respiratory depression.

Use and Consequence of Opiate Pain Medications

Find out if your use of opiate pain medications can cause problems or dependency. Take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below.

DAST-10 Assessment

The questions below are about your possible involvement with drugs during the past 12 months.

“Drug use” means (1) Using your medications in excess of the directions or (2) Using your medications to get high. “Drug use” does not include alcoholic beverages.

In the past 12 months

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Have you used drugs other than those required for medical reasons? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Do you abuse more than one drug at a time? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Are you always able to stop using drugs when you want to? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Have you had “blackouts” or “flashbacks” as a result of your drug use? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Do you ever feel bad or guilty about your drug use? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Does your spouse (or parents) ever complain about your involvement with drugs? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Have you neglected your family because of your use of drugs? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Have you engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drugs? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms (felt sick) when you stopped taking drugs? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Have you had medical problems as a result of your drug use (e.g., memory loss, hepatitis, convulsions, bleeding, etc.)? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Score 1 point for each question answered “YES,” except for question 3 for which a “NO” receives 1 point.

My score is: _____

I have my score, so now what do I do?

Score 0-2 You scored in the low-risk range	<i>Stay within the recommended prescription limits.</i>
Score 3-5 You are in the at-risk or high risk range	<i>Reduce your use of opiate medications to within the recommended prescription limits – see tips below.</i>
Score 6 or more You are in the severe risk range	<i>Your use of opiate medications could result in significant harm or even death. Consult your doctor immediately.</i>

While stopping or reducing your use of opiate medications can be hard, most people can stop or limit their use. You can:

- Change certain behaviors that lead to misuse.
- Get support from family, friends, and community.
- Seek professional help from your doctor.