



# OPIOID SAFETY

## Always follow these important Safety Tips...

- Never take a pain medication unless it is prescribed for you
- Take your pain medications only as directed. Do not take more medication or take it more often than it is prescribed by your healthcare provider.
- Do not use opioids with alcohol or any other drugs unless approved by the prescriber.
- Protect and lock your pain medications in a safe place at all times, and properly dispose of any left over medication.
- Be prepared for an emergency. Know signs of trouble and what to do for an opioid overmedication or overdose.
- Read the instructions that come with your prescription. Contact your prescriber or pharmacy with any questions.
- Never chew, cut, crush, or dissolve opioid tablets, or open opioid capsules, unless you are specifically instructed to do so
- Opioid patches must never be cut or folded, and they need to stick to the skin completely.
- Do not drive or operate machinery until you know how opioids will affect you.

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*Keep your medications stored in a safe and secure location. Deaths from drug overdose have been rising steadily over the past two decades and have become the leading cause of injury death in the United States. - CDC, 2014*

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## OVERMEDICATION OR OVERDOSE

**This is a medical emergency, know the signs, and know who to call.**

### Signs of Overmedication

- Intoxicated behavior—confusion, slurred speech, stumbling
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Feeling or acting very drowsy or groggy, or nodding off to sleep
- Unusual snoring, gasping, or snorting during sleep
- Difficulty waking up from sleep and becoming alert or staying awake

### Signs of Overdose

- Person cannot be aroused or awakened, or is unable to talk when awakened
- Any trouble with breathing: shortness of breath, slow or light breathing, stopped breathing
- Gurgling noises coming from mouth or throat
- Limp body, seems lifeless, pale, clammy face
- Fingernails or lips turned blue or purple
- Slow or unusual heartbeat or stopped heartbeat

## Be on the Alert for...

### Overdose

Call Emergency Services

**CALL 911**

### Overmedication

Call your doctor  
717-782-6829

Or

National Poison Hotline  
1-800-222-1222

A person who at first only seems to be overmedicated may get worse. They should be kept awake and watched closely. If they get worse call 911 immediately. Gather all medication bottles and give to emergency services when they arrive.

## Warning!

If a child or a pet ever swallows an opioid that was not prescribed for them, it is always an emergency. Call for help immediately.



## Possible Side Effects

Most common:

- Constipation due to opioids may not go away, so you should ask your healthcare provider how to treat this.
- Nausea may last several days, but there is medications that can help with this.
- Sedation—feeling tired or groggy—may last a few days after starting a new medication or when the dose is increased.

Less Common:

- Itching, dry skin, confusion, muscle twitching, dry mouth, sweating, fatigue, weakness, mild headaches—usually all temporary.
- Allergy and addiction occur rarely to opioids taken as prescribed for pain.

## Feeling under the weather?

If you are suffering from the common cold or flu or have other chronic respiratory illnesses you may need to adjust your medication to prevent adverse respiratory effects. Please call the office and let us know.

## Know your medications

It's important that you know what is in your medications. Some pain medications are combined with acetaminophen. While this helps your pain medicine work better too much acetaminophen can cause severe liver problems and even death. There are over 1000 over-the-counter medication that contain acetaminophen. Read the labels of all of your medications to ensure that you are not taking additional medications that contain acetaminophen or tylenol.



2501 N. Third Street, Third Floor



Harrisburg, PA 17110

2005 Technology Parkway, Suite  
245

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Visit us on the web at  
[www.advancedpaincare.com](http://www.advancedpaincare.com)

Tel: 717-728-6829

Fax: 717-782-6831

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