

Opioid medication and addiction

The basics

Health care providers sometimes prescribe opioid pain relievers for people in pain. Of course, they never want anyone to become addicted to these medicines – but it *is* possible.

Signs of addiction include:

- Having a very strong urge to use the drug for non-medical reasons
- Using the drug a lot, even if it causes bad side effects
- Losing the ability to control how much is taken, or how often it's used

Before someone gets a prescription for an opioid pain reliever, a health care provider may ask:

- If that person has ever used addictive items like tobacco, alcohol, or street drugs
- If friends or family members have ever worried that the person might have a problem with drugs or alcohol
- If anyone in the family has a history of drug or alcohol addiction
- If the person has ever been arrested or has a history of legal problems involving drug use

When someone needs an opioid pain prescription for longer than one month, the provider may ask that person to sign an “agreement.” This agreement describes the goals of treatment and how to use the medicine as directed.

Keep in mind

When patients use opioids for a long time, they may be asked to:

- Give urine samples
- Have their pills counted during office visits

Never change medication doses without first speaking to the health care provider.



Did you know?

Most chronic pain patients do not become addicted to the opioid medications that are prescribed for them.

Learn More

Register now at www.painaction.com/actionstep

There, you'll find helpful information about:

- Treatments
- Communicating with your health care provider
- Pain issues
- Medications & drug safety