



Managing chronic pain

Over 125 million people live with chronic pain. It is the most common reason people see their healthcare provider.

This brochure will help you understand your treatment goals and options and how to avoid relying on opioid pain medications that can be addictive.



Pharmaceutical Assistance
Contract for the Elderly

Balanced information for better care



What else can I do?

Participation in many activities may help with your pain. These include:

- exercise
- meditation
- weight training
- acupuncture
- yoga
- self-management programs
- tai chi
- massage

Discuss these activities with your healthcare provider before starting.

Include functional goals in your pain management plan:

1. If you could be more able to do one thing for yourself, what would it be?
2. What activities do you need help to perform that you'd rather be able to do for yourself?
3. What are your concerns about functioning your best at work, home, or in leisure activities?
4. What could help you be more independent?

What are opioids?

Opioids are powerful prescription painkillers derived from or related to morphine.

Commonly prescribed opioids include:

- hydrocodone (Vicodin and others)
- oxycodone (Percocet, Oxycontin, and others)
- methadone
- codeine and many others

These drugs can sometimes help reduce pain, but also carry important risks.

Side effects of opioids

Taking opioids may cause:

- unsteadiness on your feet
- constipation
- tiredness
- itching
- nausea or vomiting

Other serious risks of opioids

The risks of opioid drugs increase with longer use and higher doses:

- addiction or dependence
- overdose
- falling and breaking a bone
- low testosterone in men

Visit [AlosaHealth.org/Pain](https://www.AlosaHealth.org/Pain)
for links to your local Area Agency on Aging
and other resources.

Reducing or stopping opioids

Opioids can reduce pain in the short term, but are not ideal for long-term use unless a person has cancer. For everyone else, it is healthier to stop using opioid medications as soon as possible.

Your healthcare provider may recommend you stop by tapering, or gradually lowering your daily dose. Most patients do not have increased pain and report feeling more active after stopping their opioid.



Talk to your healthcare provider if you have side effects or no longer feel better on opioids.

Other medication options to treat pain

There are many options for managing pain. Your healthcare provider may recommend a different medication, either prescription or over-the-counter. The specific choice will depend on the kind of pain you have. Depending on the location of your pain, there may be procedures that can reduce it.

Naloxone to prevent overdose

Naloxone (Narcan) reverses the effects of taking too much of an opioid. It can prevent overdose death from opioids. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more.

Opioid prescriptions: Protect yourself

1. Combinations can be dangerous.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you are also using:

- alcohol
- sleeping pills
- antianxiety medications
- opioids prescribed by another healthcare provider

2. Take as prescribed.

3. Keep track of when you take a dose.

4. Report side effects to your healthcare provider.

5. Do not drive after taking an opioid.

6. Do not share your medication with others.

What works for you may be too much for someone else.

Protect your family

1. Secure your pain prescriptions.

Store all opioids in a locked place.

2. Throw 'em out!

No longer taking opioids?

- Mix with an unappealing substance like used coffee grounds or kitty litter and place in the trash.
- Fold opioid patches in half, adhesive side together, and discard.
- Discard in medication return bins at local pharmacies or police stations.
- Look for drug “take back” events in your city or town.

The Independent Drug Information Service (IDIS) is supported by the PACE Program of the Department of Aging of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This material is provided by Alosa Health, a nonprofit organization which is not affiliated with any pharmaceutical company. IDIS is a program of Alosa Health.

These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by the treating physician based on an individual patient's clinical condition.

AlosaHealth.org



Pharmaceutical Assistance
Contract for the Elderly



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF AGING



IDIS

Independent Drug
Information Service



Alosa
Health

Balanced information for better care

Copyright 2017 by Alosa Health. All rights reserved.