

# Slowly Stopping Opioid Medications

## Helpful Tips to Getting Off Your Opioid Successfully

### Is Your Opioid Medication Helping You or Hurting You?

The goal of chronic pain treatment is to help you regain the ability to move and participate in activities that are important to you. Opioid medications may be helpful after an acute injury or surgery but can lose their effect on reducing pain over time. This could keep you from reconnecting with what is important to you. It is time to discover a different way to treat your pain. Talk to your provider about alternatives to opioids and how to safely reduce your opioid medications.

### What is an Opioid?

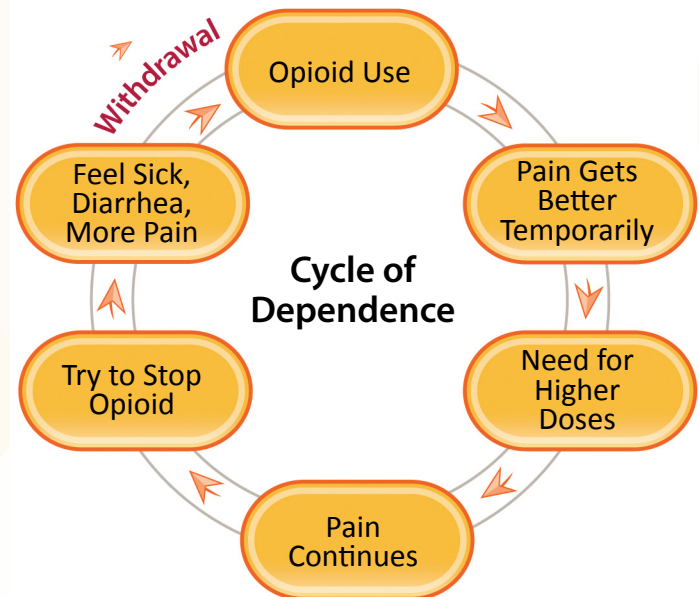
Opioids are a type of pain medication. Common opioids include:

- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Hydrocodone
- Methadone
- Hydromorphone
- Fentanyl

### Possible Risks of Opioids

- Feeling tired or drowsy
- Constipation
- Memory problems
- Worse pain
- Sexual health problems
- Falls and accidents
- Overdose or addiction

What concerns do you have about taking opioid medications?



### How Will You Feel While Slowly Reducing Your Opioid Medication?

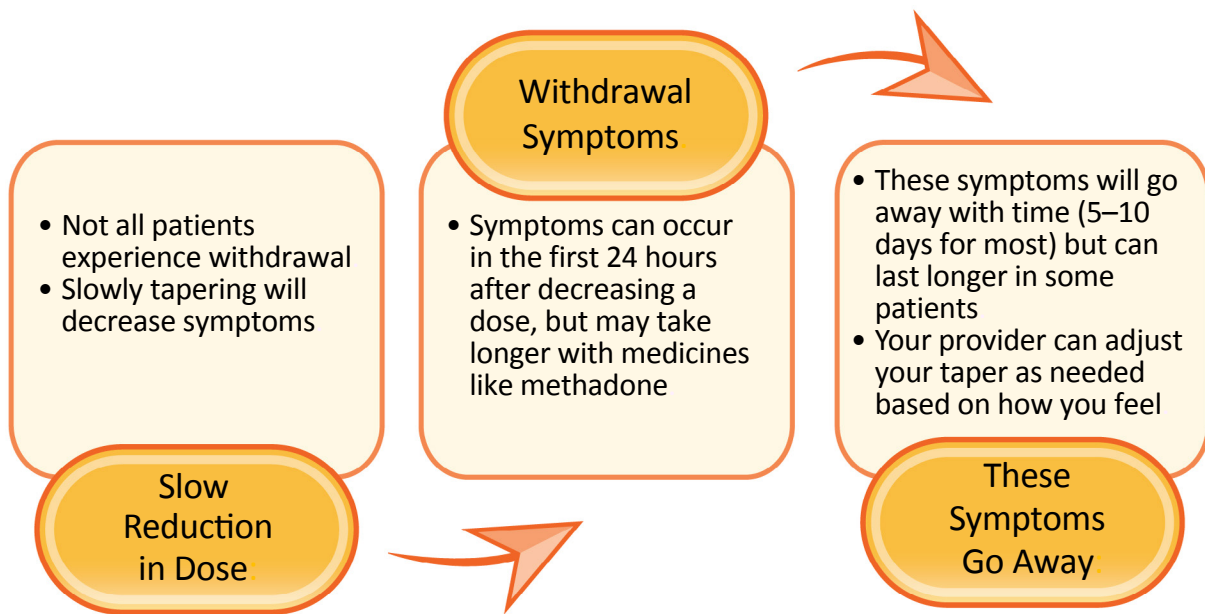
If you have been taking opioids for longer than a few months, your body is used to taking them. Stopping it quickly can cause withdrawal symptoms like:

- Muscle aches
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
- Worsening pain
- Difficulty sleeping
- Craving for the opioid
- Diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting

To keep you from having these withdrawal symptoms, your provider will **very slowly reduce the opioid dose**. This will minimize the discomfort you experience. If you experience any of these symptoms, notify your care team and they can help. Withdrawal symptoms usually only last for a short period.

Once you start reducing the opioid dose, do not take extra doses or try going back to your original dose without talking to your provider. Your body may no longer be used to the higher dose. Taking more opioids can put you at risk for an overdose.

## Time of Withdrawal



### Self-Care You Can Do While Reducing the Opioid Dose

- Participate in wellness activities: meditation, relaxation, prayer.
- Focus on deep breathing: sit in a quiet place with eyes closed and deeply breathe in and out.
- Work closely with your provider and report symptoms of withdrawal and craving for the opioid.
- Enlist support from friends and family; consider joining a support/recovery group.
- Know that withdrawal is temporary and while it may be uncomfortable, it is not life-threatening.
- Stopping opioid medications may improve your pain and allow you to be more active.
- If your pain remains a problem, ask your primary care provider for help.

**\*\*Do not stop taking any medications without first speaking to your provider\*\***

**If you have a strong desire to take more opioids, cannot take your mind off opioids, or find it difficult to take opioids as prescribed, it is important to talk with your provider.**

### Tapering Schedule:

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Please call \_\_\_\_\_ with any questions or concerns.

**Veterans Crisis Line**

**1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text - 838255**