

Slowly Stopping Opioids

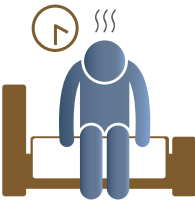
Your opioid medicine may not be helping as much as you think!

The goal of chronic pain treatment is to help you regain the ability to move and participate in activities.

Opioid medicines may be helpful after an acute injury or surgery but can be less effective over time.

Talk to your provider about alternatives to opioids for pain and how to safely reduce (taper) your opioid dose.

Possible risks of opioids:



Feeling tired or drowsy



Worsening pain



- Depression, mood changes
- Irritability, anger



Constipation



- Becoming physically dependent
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Opioid use disorder



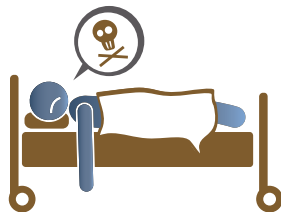
- COPD and sleep apnea may get worse
- Pneumonia



- Unsteady walking
- Increased risk of falls, broken bones, or concussion



- Car accidents
- Impaired driving



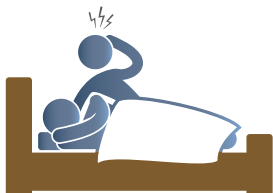
Overdose—especially when combined with alcohol, benzodiazepines, and/or street drugs



- Memory issues
- Thinking problems



- Birth defects
- Baby may need emergency care because of withdrawal symptoms



- Reduced levels of sex hormones
- Reduced sexual function



The key to success

The best way to reduce or stop opioids is to work with your provider to lower the dose very slowly. This may take months, but it is the safest approach.








Withdrawal symptoms are temporary. Reducing opioid doses very slowly will decrease the discomfort you feel.

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your healthcare team and they can help.

Possible signs of opioid withdrawal:

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

Tips for success when stopping opioids:

-  Take an active role in your wellness. Try meditation, relaxation, yoga, or prayer.
-  Talk to a behavioral health provider to learn strategies to better manage pain and opioid-related concerns.
-  Work closely with your provider. Report symptoms of withdrawal and craving for the opioid.
-  Ask for support from friends and family. Consider joining a support/recovery group.
-  Know that withdrawal is temporary and may be uncomfortable. Usually it is not life-threatening.
-  Stop opioid medicines slowly. This may improve your pain and allow you to be more active.
-  Ask your healthcare team for help if your pain concerns you.



Do not stop taking any medicines without first speaking to your provider.

It is important to talk to your provider if you:

- have a strong desire to take more opioids
- cannot take your mind off opioids
- take extra doses or take the dose before you are due to take it

Tapering schedule:

Please call _____ with any questions or concerns.



Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 or Text 838255