

If You Have Chronic Pain



Chronic pain can be overwhelming and frustrating. You and your doctor can work together to improve your daily life and manage your pain. There are many hopeful solutions. Prescription opioids are one option for helping to reduce pain but come with some risks. It is important to understand all of your options and the risks and benefits of each.

Take control of how you manage your pain and ask your doctor about different options. Work with your doctor to find safe and effective care to help you reach your goals.



1 What are the treatment options that don't involve opioids?

Chronic pain can often be managed without opioids, and many other options have been shown to work better with fewer side effects.

Examples include:

- Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Certain antidepressants and anticonvulsants

Keep in mind that sometimes you may feel worse before you feel better when starting a new treatment program.

***Chronic pain:** pain lasting 3 months or more that can be caused by a disease or condition, injury, medical treatment, or even an unknown reason.*

***Opioids:** natural or manufactured chemicals that bind to receptors in your brain and body to reduce pain. Common prescription opioids include oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine.*



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2 What can I expect if I am prescribed opioids to reduce my pain?

It's important to understand that opioids can reduce pain in the short-term, but will not likely relieve all of your pain. The goal of any pain management is to increase your ability to do everyday activities.

Follow up with your doctor within the first few days of starting your prescription to ensure opioids are helping. You should also discuss what kind of pain relief and improvement you can expect overall.

Prescription opioids may have side effects like sleepiness and dizziness. Even when taken as directed there is a risk of tolerance (needing more of the drug to produce the same effects) and physical dependence (experiencing withdrawal when the drug is stopped).

3 What else can I do to manage my chronic pain?

Develop your personal pain management plan with your doctor which may include:

- Your personal treatment goals, which describe what you may achieve as you make progress
- Information about treatment options
- Referral to specialists as needed

