

Managing Your Pain with Opioids

Be aware. Be informed. Be careful!

The pain that occurs as a result of an injury can be overwhelming. As an injured worker seeking medical treatment, you may be prescribed opioids. Opioids are narcotic pain medications such as Vicodin, Oxycontin and Percocet. While many physicians concede that opioids can help manage your pain, be aware however: improper use of this medication can lead to addiction or overdose.

Opioid dependence is more common than you might think, and it can happen to anyone. Opioid dependence affects men and women of all ages, ethnic groups, income and educational levels.

Here are the risks of taking opioids and tips for using them correctly.

Be Aware

Prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the United States.

- >> Colorado has the second highest rate of prescription-painkiller abuse in the nation.
- >> The Center for Disease Control recently reported that 75 percent of all pharmaceutical deaths involve opioids, whether ingested alone or combined with other drugs.
- >> Every day in the United States, 105 people die as a result of drug overdose, and another 6,748 are treated in emergency departments for the misuse or abuse of drugs.
- >> The unintentional drug overdose death rate in recent years has been driven by increased use of a class of prescription drugs called opioid analgesics.

Be Informed

Ask the pharmacist or your primary care physician as much as you can about your prescribed pain medication.

- >> While at the pharmacy, read the patient advisory leaflet and the directions on the medication bottle.
- >> Be sure you understand what you're taking and the risks involved. If you don't understand them, ask the pharmacist to explain the directions more thoroughly.
- >> There are a number of alternative methods for relieving pain such as physical therapy, massage therapy or acupuncture. Ask your primary care physician for additional information on these methods or other types of alternative approaches.

Be Careful

Take the medication only as directed.

- >> Pain medication will reduce your pain, but it won't take it away completely. Even if the medication is not providing the relief you expect, you should not alter the prescribed dose. Please contact your healthcare provider for advice.

If you have any questions about your medication or your treatment, please call your primary care physician.



Questions to ask your primary care physician about **prescription opioids**:

- Why are you prescribing this medication?
- What other options do I have for pain control?
- What are the side-effects of the medication? How can I manage them?
- Will this treatment limit my activities?
- How will I know if I am becoming addicted to the medication?
- Will I have withdrawal symptoms if I stop taking the medication?

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