



## Ask your doctor these questions about opioid pain medications:

### 1. Is this prescription for pain medicine an opioid?

Your doctor can tell you what an opioid is, and how to use it safely to relieve pain.

### 2. At what level of pain should I take this prescription?

Opioids are for moderate to severe pain only. Lesser pain should be treated with safer, less powerful drugs.

### 3. Do I have to take every pill in the prescription?

No, you should only take the pills when pain levels are moderate to severe. There is no need to use leftover pills.

### 4. Where can I safely dispose of remaining pills?

There are several options, depending on where you live. The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs' website has a Drug Take-Back page that will help you find the locations in your county that accept unused prescription drugs. Find the closest drug take-back location at <https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/GetHelpNow/PillDrop.aspx>.

### 5. What can I do to avoid addiction?

Use opioids only when you have moderate to severe pain, and as directed by your doctor. Do not take more pills than your doctor specifies, or more often. Do not save pills for later use. To protect others from addiction, do not give them to friends or family. Dispose of unused pills safely.

### 6. What are possible warning signs of dependence or addiction?

There are many, but here are a few: Desire or cravings to use the pain pills without actual pain symptoms. Asking for refills even though pain has subsided. Using more pills than specified or taking them more often. Going to a different doctor for pain medication when you have been refused by your current physician. Using or considering use of illegal drugs such as heroin as a substitute for pain pills.

### 7. What can I do if I believe that I might have developed a dependence on this drug?

Talk to your doctor immediately if you or a family member show signs of addiction or dependence. Early detection can help stop the destructive cycle of addiction before it becomes too powerful to resist. Or talk to an addiction counseling organization.

When properly used, opioids for pain provide much-needed relief during the healing and recovery process. But uninformed use or abuse of opioids can lead to addiction and have devastating effects.

If your doctor prescribes an opioid pain medication such as Vicodin, Percocet, hydrocodone, or OxyContin, be sure to ask these simple questions.



- Be smart.
- Be safe.
- Be sure.**

A Public Health Advocacy Program from the Pennsylvania Medical Society

For more information on the Pennsylvania Medical Society's **Be Smart. Be Safe. Be Sure.** initiative, go to [www.pamedsoc.org/OpioidInfo](http://www.pamedsoc.org/OpioidInfo).