

Opioid Safety

Opioid (narcotic) medicines can help people manage moderate to severe pain. Not everyone needs opioids for comfort. If opioids are needed, they are meant to be used for a short time. Opioids can be a safe and helpful part of your care plan, but should be weaned when no longer needed.

Key Points

When taking opioids:

- **Never take more opioids than prescribed.**
- **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** drive or use heavy machinery.
- **Do not** use other medicines that make you tired or sleepy. Tell your doctor if you use:
 - Benzodiazepines (such as diazepam, alprazolam, lorazepam)
 - Sleeping aids (such as zolpidem or trazodone)
- **Never** share your medicines with others.
- **Store your medicines in a locked or secure place.**
- Keep opioids away from kids and pets.
 - Children ages 6 and younger and pets are at highest risk for taking them by accident.
 - Ages 12 and older may be looking to take them for other uses.

Safe Medicine Disposal

The best option is to use a MedDrop box. Many of them are at local police stations. To find safe drop off sites, go to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration website:

[https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations)

[medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-drug-take-back-locations)

Another option is to drop them off at a local “Prescription Drug Take Back Days.” These events happen about twice a year. Call your local public health office for details about the next event.

Other options:

- Go to the Safer Community website: www.safercommunity.net/meddrop Choose the “Drug Poisoning Prevention” tab. Click on “MedDrop.”
- Go to the Dose of Reality website: doseofrealitywi.gov/drug-takeback/find-a-take-back-location

UW Health Take Back Bin Locations

Take back bins are found in the UW Health pharmacies listed below. All are in Madison, WI.

- [1 S. Park Clinic Pharmacy, 1 S. Park Street](#)
- [Arboretum Clinic Pharmacy, 1102 S. Park Street](#)
- [Northeast Family Medical Center Pharmacy, 3209 Dryden Drive](#)
- [East Clinic Pharmacy, 5249 E. Terrace Drive](#)
- [Union Corners Clinic Pharmacy, 2402 Winnebago Street](#)
- [University Hospital Outpatient Pharmacy, 600 Highland Avenue](#)
- [UW Health at The American Center Pharmacy, 4602 Eastpark Blvd](#)
- [West Clinic Pharmacy, 451 Junction Rd](#)
- [West Towne Clinic Pharmacy, 7102 Mineral Point Rd](#)

Options If No Drop Box Available

You may also buy a Deterra[®] Drug Deactivation System. It is easy to use and safe for the environment. You can buy it from local pharmacies. If you think you will need this, ask about it when picking up your medicine.

If there is no drop box in your area, mix the pills with either kitty litter or coffee grounds. Seal in a plastic bag and throw in the trash.

What Your Family, Friends and Caregivers Should Know

If the person taking opioids is in a deep sleep and snoring, and appears to be having trouble breathing, wake them up. **Call 911** right away if you have trouble waking them up.

If you are worried about overdoses (accidental or intentional), talk with your pharmacist. He or she can talk with you about naloxone (Narcan) rescue kits.

Constipation

Constipation is a common opioid side effect. Opioids slow down bowel movements through the intestine. Your doctor may suggest taking a laxative on a regular schedule. Other ways to prevent constipation:

- Eat foods high in fiber.
 - Raw vegetables
 - Whole grain breads and cereals
 - Fresh, canned, or dried fruits, especially those with skin or seeds (apples, plums, prunes, pears, peaches, tomatoes, berries, raisins, dates) and prune juice
- Drink eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of fluid each day.
- Check with your doctor about your exercise options.
 - Exercise as much as you can.
 - Increase the amount you walk.

For more information, see “Constipation from Opioids (Narcotics)” (HFFY #4843).

Who to Call

Call your doctor or clinic if you have questions or concerns.

Spanish Version HFFY #7988s

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©7/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7988.