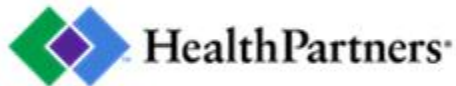


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# PAIN MANAGEMENT AND OPIOID GUIDE

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This pain management and opioid guide was created by the Minnesota health plans listed on the cover page. We want to help our community understand the problem with continued opioid use. Use it to learn more about pain, pain medication, and ways to self-care. Share this information with your family and friends.

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# Understanding Pain

## What kind of pain do you have?

### Acute Pain

Pain is one of the most common reasons people see a doctor. Acute pain is your body's alarm system sending a message that something is wrong.

Acute pain can be mild and last just a moment, or it might be severe and last for days or weeks. Acute pain can be caused by an injury, infection or disease. This pain can be sharp, shooting, stabbing, throbbing or stinging. It usually goes away when the cause of the pain is fixed. Acute pain that doesn't get better can become chronic pain.

It is important not to ignore acute pain since this is your body telling you to slow down and take care of what is causing the pain. Ignoring the pain may lead to a person doing too much, too soon and before their body is healed.

**Pain is considered a normal part of the healing process.**

Pain is an unpleasant feeling. It can be an emotional experience since it's due to some kind of medical condition like an illness or injury. How you feel and react to pain depends on what is causing the pain and several other personal factors such as:

- Your genetic makeup and how sensitive your body is to pain
- Eating habits, exercise, getting enough rest and sleep
- History of health problems
- Stress and anxiety
- Past experiences with pain
- Biological, psychological and other social factors like religion or stress over money

### Chronic pain

Chronic pain can occur daily and continue for months or even years. It's usually described as pain lasting three months or more. Chronic pain can be mild to severe and may be constant or come and go. This pain could be dull, throbbing, burning or aching.

People experience pain differently. An injury or illness that may be extremely painful for one person may be only slightly painful for another.



Understanding your pain and your individual experience is important. Work with your doctor to develop a pain management plan that will meet your needs.

## Talk with your doctor about pain

Have you had an injury or are you preparing for surgery? Recovery will be different for everyone, but some pain can be expected. Find out about your pain management options by talking to your doctor.

### Questions you can ask:

- How long will I be in pain after my injury or surgery?
- What options are available for treating my pain?
- Could any of these treatment options cause a bad reaction with other medications I take?

**If you and your doctor decide that an opioid pain medication is the best treatment option, ask the following questions:**

- What are the risks and side effects of taking opioid medications?
- Are there over-the-counter medicine (like Advil®) I can take as an alternative?
- How many days should I take the opioid medication?
- If I feel better can I stop taking the medication?
- I am pregnant. Should I take pain medication?

Remember your pain should be controlled enough so you can walk to the bathroom, sit in a chair and cough. You shouldn't be so medicated that you can't remember things. Here are some tips to help you talk to your doctor about how you are feeling.

### Where does it hurt?

Be specific. Let the doctor know it's not just your "back" when it's your "lower back and sometimes down your legs." If your pain moves around, tell your doctor all areas that can be painful and the areas that hurt most often.



[Click here to print out a body chart so you can circle your pain areas.](#)

### What kind of pain are you feeling?

Most of the time, people experience one or two pain "feelings." Sometimes a range of sensations are experienced. The most common pain types are:

- Sharp stabbing pain
- Extreme heat or burning sensation
- Extreme cold
- Throbbing, swollen, inflamed tissue

- Sensitivity to contact / touching
- Numbness, tingling, pins and needles

### What is Your Pain Level?

Everyone feels pain differently so it's important to explain to your doctor how the pain feels to you. Sometimes a pain scale, like the one below, can help you explain the intensity of your pain.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Mild to Moderate Pain</b>			<b>Moderately strong</b>			<b>Severe Pain</b>			
Sometimes mild pain is noticeable and distracting, however, you can get used to it and adapt.			Moderately strong pain may interfere with normal activities. It could be difficult to concentrate. You can't ignore the pain for more than a few minutes.			Severe pain dominates your senses and significantly limits your ability to perform normal daily activities or maintain social relationships. Interferes with sleep.			

### How Long Are You in Pain?

Give the doctor more detail than saying you're 'always' in pain, or 'sometimes' in pain. Try something like:

*"I always feel some aching pain in this spot, but its worse in the early mornings and it lasts about an hour."*

Think about your pain and answer these questions:

- Do you feel worse when you first wake up and are stiff, or does the pain seem to worsen as the day wears on?
- Do you notice a sharp pain when getting dressed in the morning that goes away after 10 minutes?
- Does the pain last for a few hours or does it feel better after you take a nap?
- Does your pain keep you from doing normal activities or things you want to do?

### Does Anything Else Trigger Your Pain?

- Think about the pain in relation to the timing of medications: Does the pain get worse or better right after you take certain medications, or does it not seem to be related to medications at all?
- Does your pain get worse when you are doing certain activities such as going up and down stairs, grocery shopping, vacuuming, etc.?

- Is the pain brought on when clothes touch your body or when someone hugs you? Or does it just appear out of nowhere?
- Is the pain worsened by stress – like after you opened bills?
- Do you see a connection with being around different people and the pain feeling better or worse?
- Think about other times when your pain seems to be better or worse.

### Pain Relievers You Can Buy at the Store (over-the-counter)

Pain may be managed successfully with non-opioid medications. Talk to your doctor about these options and see what is right for you.

Below is a list of common over-the-counter pain relievers that are not opioids. These medications might help you manage your pain.

Acetaminophen	Ibuprofen	Naproxen	Aspirin
Tylenol®	Advil®, Motrin®	Aleve®, Naprosyn®	Aspirin

At times, mild pain may be managed without medications. Some pain may be managed with self-care, such as those listed below.

### Self-Care for Pain Management

Distraction is undervalued. We know from research that focusing attention on pain makes the pain worse, and distraction can reduce pain.

Social contact can help keep moods stable and stops feelings of being alone and depressed. Simply being in the same room as another person has the potential to reduce stress. Try playing cards or see if your Place of worship or local community center has social hours. Keep the activities easy and stress free.



**Self-Care Approaches to Treating Pain** by Mayo Clinic ([Click here](#)).

## Maintain a Healthy State of Well-Being

Maintaining your overall health and well-being may help in reducing the pain response. Living a healthy lifestyle, having positive social interactions and feeling positive about your life can make it easier to handle health problems when they happen.



**Taking Charge of Health and Well-Being** by the University of Minnesota [\(Click here\)](#).



**Healthy LifeStyle** by Mayo Clinic [\(Click here\)](#).

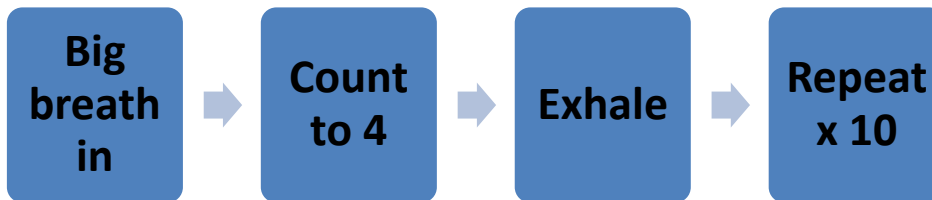
**Other ideas to help you with pain management are:**

### Rest-Ice-Compress-Elevate (RICE)

Rest-Ice-Compress-Elevate (RICE)	
Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rest injured area</li><li>• Limit regular activities</li></ul>
Ice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ice injury 4-8 times per day. Place a cloth between ice and skin</li><li>• 10 minutes on and 10 minutes off</li></ul>
Compress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply pressure to reduce swelling</li><li>• Use a wrap bandage, so it's snug but not too tight</li></ul>
Elevate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Place injured area on a pillow above the heart</li><li>• Keep it raised whenever you can. Use pillows for support if needed</li></ul>

## Deep Breathing

Take a deep breath, so that your stomach expands like a balloon with each breath. Inhale to a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale to a count of four, then hold for a count of four. Repeat 10 times every morning and night.



## Physical Activity

The benefits of exercise are well known, and physical activity may help to reduce pain.

EXERCISE



STRETCHING



YOGA



WALKING



BIKING



TAI CHI



SWIMMING



WEIGHTS



## Different Options for Managing Pain

While there are many prescriptions and over-the-counter medications available for managing pain, there are other options you may want to try as you heal and recover. This guide explains some of your options. Talk to your health care provider about other options that may work the best for you.



This list includes examples of some of the most commonly used and effective therapy options that haven't been mentioned yet.

Alternative Therapy	How Does It Work?
Physical and Occupational Therapy	A combination of activities, exercises and other techniques used to relieve pain as well as improve range of motion, coordination, flexibility, strength and endurance.
TENS or Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation	TENS uses low voltage electrical current to relieve pain. Always talk to your doctor or physical therapist before trying TENS.
Chiropractic Care or Osteopathic Manipulation	Manipulation of the spine or moving the spine to relieve pain and helps the body to heal.
Acupressure	A form of therapy used by applying pressure to specific areas of the body to relieve pain.
Acupuncture	Very thin needles are inserted into the skin at specific 'acupoints' to relieve pain.
Therapeutic Massage	Aids in the healing process by reducing muscle tension, nerve pressure and stress.
Cognitive Behavior Therapy	Psychological treatment used to help alleviate pain and depression by identifying a person's negative thoughts and attitudes and developing coping skill to adjust to the individual's symptoms.
Biofeedback	Biofeedback combines monitoring of your body functions (like your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing) with relaxation exercises to learn how to self-manage pain.
Specialty Pain Care	A combination of several treatments and therapies to manage the physical, emotional and psychosocial aspects of pain.



Call your health insurance company to see which alternative therapies treatment would be covered under your medical benefit. The customer/member service telephone number is on the back of your health insurance member identification card.



**Complementary, Alternative, or Integrative Health: What's In a Name?** by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health ([Click here](#)).

## Phone Apps for Reducing Stress and Pain

These wellness apps you can download to your phone. Some health and wellness apps may cost you money to purchase. Go to your phone's App Store to learn more.



**Lifestyle Strategies for Pain Management** by Mayo Clinic ([Click here](#)).

# Understanding Opioids - A Pain Medication

## What are Pain Medications?



Pain-numbing medicines made from the opium poppy plant are called opiates. Man-made versions of these drugs are opioids. Opioids, also known as narcotics, are used to manage pain. Opioids are an important pain management option, but they have also have a number of side effects, including physical dependency. Dependency is when your body becomes used to opioids and goes into withdrawal when the medication is stopped. Prolonged use carries the risk of addiction and overdose. An opioid overdose, which causes your breathing to slow down, can cause death.

**Opioids are legal when they are taken as prescribed by a healthcare provider.** Illegal opioids are traded or sold outside of medical settings or “on the street.”

Commonly Prescribed Opioid Pain Meds	
Generic Name	Example of Brand Name
Codeine	Tylenol with Codeine®
Fentanyl	Duragesic®
Hydrocodone	Vicodin®
	Lortab®
	Lorcet®
Morphine	Kadian®
	MS Contin®
Oxycodone	OxyContin®
	Endocet®
	Percocet®
Tramadol	Ultracet®
	Ultram®

Street Names for <b>Illegally</b> Purchased Opioids	
357s	Goodfella
Apache	Hillbilly
Blue Heaven	Heroin
Captain Cody	Horse
Chill Pills	Hydros
China Girl	Pinks
Demmies	Red Rock
Dillies	Sizzurp
Dollies	TNT

## How Do Opioids Work?

Opioids attach to receptors -- a part of cells -- found in the brain, spinal cord, and other areas of the body. They tell the brain to block pain and make you feel calm and happy. Opioids do not treat the cause of most painful conditions. They make your body feel the pain differently.



[Click here to watch](#) a video on *Why the Brain Loves Opioids*.

## Is Opioid Misuse a Problem?

Since 1999, over 700,000 people have died from a drug overdose. In 2017, 130 Americans died each day from an opioid overdose (Centers for Disease Control data). The opioid crisis is a national public health emergency. The United States has 5% of the world's population but uses 80% of the world's opioids.

## Minnesota has seen a rise in opioid and heroin addiction

	Minnesota	National
Costs to the US Economy	<b>\$31.8 billion</b> from 1999 to 2015.	<b>\$504 billion</b> in 2016.
Opioid Overdoses & Deaths	<b>422 overdose deaths</b> in 2017 and 46% involved prescription opioids <b>2,037 emergency room visits</b> for survived overdoses in 2017. <b>15 to 34-year olds</b> visited the most emergency room in 2017-2017.	<b>47,000+ deaths</b> in 2017 and 36% involved prescription opioids. <b>11.5 million people misused</b> opioid medications in 2016.
Prescriptions	<b>3 million+ prescriptions</b> handed out in 2017. <b>749 prescription drug arrests</b> in 2017.	<b>Prescription opioids increased almost 4 times</b> , but Americans did not report lower pain levels (from 1999 to 2016). <b>3 out of 4 people who used heroin misused opioids first</b>
Treatment	<b>10,332 treatment admissions</b> in 2016. <b>89% capacity in Opioid Treatment Program</b> in June 2017	<b>2,000,000+ people have an opioid use disorder</b> <b>20% of people get treatment</b>

In Minnesota, 2,833 children were removed from their home due to a parent's drug use in 2016. That is a 128% increase since 2012, and it's mostly due to opioid use.



[Click here to watch videos](#) and read more information on the Opioid crisis.

## What are the Side Effects?

The most common side effects of opioids are drowsiness and impaired judgment. When taking a narcotic pain medication, do not drink alcohol, drive, or operate heavy machinery.

Opioids can slow your breathing, and lower your heart rate and blood pressure, so talk to your doctor and make sure these medications are safe for you, especially if you're taking other medications.

Dangerous reactions can occur if you take too much, take them too often, or mix them with alcohol, illegal drugs, and some medications. These reactions could be fatal. Some people may also experience side effects like:

- Sleepiness • Confusion • Slow-Thinking • Dizzy or Lightheaded • Constipation
- Itching • Sweating • Nausea or Vomiting • Decreased sex drive



[Click here to read](#) more information on opioids and possible side effects.



[Click here to watch a video](#) on what doctors should tell patients about opioids.

## What are the Risks?

Risks of opioid therapy include:

- Trouble breathing
- Worsening of pain
- Impaired driving
- Tolerance (which means needing a higher dose to get the same relief)
- Dependency (which means your body needs the opioids to function)
- Withdrawal
- Addiction

When people take opioids with other drugs, this can cause even more problems. It is important to talk with your doctor about everything you take.



[Click here to learn more about serious risks of prolonged opioid use.](#)

## Caution When Taking an Opioid

After taking opioid pain drugs for a while, you might find that you need more and more of the drug to feel the same pain relief. This is called tolerance. It's not the same as addiction, which involves the uncontrollable use of a drug.

Opioids are a strong medicine that can be addictive. This means a person keeps using opioids even though it causes negative outcomes in their personal lives or workplace. Opioids can make your brain and body believe the drug is necessary for survival. Both legal and illegal opioids carry a risk of overdose if a person takes too much of the drug or if opioids are combined with other drugs.



[Click here to watch a documentary](#) called “the Deadliest Drug Crisis in American History.”

[Click here to watch a video](#) on “The life of an opioid addict.”

If you are worried about the amount of opioid pain medication you are taking:

- Talk with your doctor
- Talk with your pharmacist. Ask the pharmacist about medication therapy management (MTM). MTM is when a pharmacist reviews all your medications.
- Talk with your doctor about a pain clinic. A pain clinic specializes in helping you manage your pain.
- You can also call the customer/member service number on the back of your health insurance member identification (ID) card. Ask to speak to someone about MTM.

### How to Store Pain Medications

Opioid pain medications are considered a narcotic and need to be stored securely.

- Store medications in a place in your home that is out of sight from children and visitors. It’s best to use a locking medicine cabinet. If you don’t have one, travel cases that lock are available to carry prescription medicines.
- Return medication to the secure location after every use. Avoid leaving medication or pill containers on countertops, tables or nightstands in open view where they can be easily used by others.
- Do not keep loose pills in easily opened plastic bags or containers in your purse, luggage or office drawer.

### Unused Medication

When your medications are no longer needed, they should be disposed of properly. Do not keep these medications for later use. Keeping old pills in your home puts you at risk for:

- Accidental poisoning
- Theft
- Drug abuse

That’s why safe storage and disposal of medicines are so important.

### How to properly dispose unused medications:

- Some pharmacies or law enforcement offices offer drug take-back programs. Check with your pharmacy or [click here](#) to find a Drug Take Back location near you.
- National Drug Take Back events happen at specific times throughout the year and are an opportunity for community members to safely dispose of unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs at no charge.
- Avoid flushing prescriptions down the toilet or pouring in a drain because they can pollute water supplies. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has a web page about managing unwanted medications and a search for collection sites in Minnesota. [Click here](#) to find that information.
- Earth911.com is a website all about being earth friendly. Click on [where to recycle](#) to search for medication takeback locations near you.

### Websites for More Facts

Take a minute to review these valuable resources for more information.



The CDC website has an excellent CDC Rx Awareness Campaign currently in progress.

[Click here.](#)



WebMD has an Opioid Pain Medication guide and video. [Click here.](#)

# Research we used - Bibliography

Listed below are all of the sources used in this guide. There is a lot of work happening in Minnesota and around the country to help educate on opioids and pain medication. Use this list to learn even more.

## Understanding Pain

### Pages 3-11

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## Understanding Opioids

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<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/opioid-dashboard/index.html#NumberPrescriptions>
- Minnesota's Opioid Action Plan  
[http://mn.gov/gov-stat/pdf/2018\\_02\\_14\\_Minnesota\\_Opioid\\_Action\\_Plan.pdf](http://mn.gov/gov-stat/pdf/2018_02_14_Minnesota_Opioid_Action_Plan.pdf)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Resource Center  
<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/>
- Minnesota Department of Health Opioid Dashboard  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/opioids/opioid-dashboard/index.html#MisuseNumbers>

Blue Advantage and MinnesotaCare  
1-800-711-9862; TTY 711

Medica  
1-888-347-3630

HealthPartners  
1-800-883-2177; TTY 711

South Country Health Alliance  
1-866-567-7242 (toll-free)  
TTY 1-800-627-3529 or 711

Hennepin Health  
612-873-5663.

UCare  
612-676-6500  
1-800-688-2534 (TTY)

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ملاحظة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، اتصل على الرقم أعلاه.

သတိ။ ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်းအားအခမဲ့ဘာသာပြန်ပေးခြင်း အကူအညီလိုအပ်ပါက၊ အထက်ပါဖုန်းနံပါတ်ကိုခေါ်ဆိုပါ။

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請注意，如果您需要免費協助傳譯這份文件，請撥打上面的電話號碼。

Attention. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide gratuite pour interpréter le présent document, veuillez appeler au numéro ci-dessus.

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알려드립니다. 이 문서에 대한 이해를 돕기 위해 무료로 제공되는 도움을 받으시려면 위의 전화번호로 연락하십시오.

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Внимание: если вам нужна бесплатная помощь в устном переводе данного документа, позвоните по указанному выше телефону.

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